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**EXAMINING WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF  
SPORT PARTICIPATION AND (DIS)EMPOWERMENT**

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SPORT PARTICIPATION AND (DIS)EMPOWERMENT**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Dr. Burn Jang Lim and Young Ae Yoon. I also dedicate my dissertation work to my beloved son, Younghyun Kim. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Suhyun Huh, who belongs to heaven.

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# **Examining Women's Experience of Sport Participation and (Dis)Empowerment**

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Sport has demonstrated the capacity to generate positive personal change for girls and women (e.g., Blinde, Taub, & Han, 2001; Brandy, 2005). While it is suggested that women's participation in sport can empower them and provide a safe place for them to be themselves, sport experiences can also reinforce the traditional gender roles and expectations and make women feel powerless (e.g., Brace-Govan, 2004; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). The inconsistency of outcomes from women's sport experiences suggests that sport does not automatically result in positive outcomes (Chalip, 2006; Green, 2008). Therefore, this study utilizes Zimmerman's framework of Psychological Empowerment, empowerment at the individual level of analysis (Zimmerman, 1995), to explore the sport experiences of women and the empowerment processes and outcomes associated with those experiences. By utilizing the framework, this study aimed to examine how sport experiences affected female participants' daily lives across different life domains and to identify which attributes of these sport experiences facilitated

women's empowerment or disempowerment. To understand how sport experiences relevant to empowerment, this study utilized an interpretive approach. Twenty three Korean female sport participants were interviewed in-depth using a semi-structured interview technique with probing. The interviewees were asked about their backgrounds of sport participation and then described their sport experiences that they think have strengthened and weakened their capabilities. As results, nearly all the components and elements of the framework were indicated in the interview data. Both empowering and disempowering outcomes and sport elements associated with the outcomes were identified. Some of the women's empowerment was limited to the sport context, while others infiltrated other life domains such as at work, school, or home. The findings in this study suggest to re-think the conceptualization and boundary condition of Zimmerman's empowerment framework by proposing two concepts of individual-level empowerment: self empowerment and action empowerment.



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## **Chapter1: Introduction**

Though their advances have been many, women across the globe are still subject to unfair perceptions and treatment. All 133 countries around the world still face gender inequality according to the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report on inequality between men and women in economic, political, educational and health-based criteria (World Economic Forum, 2013). Although 86 countries improved their gender gap from 2012, progress remains slow on economic equality and political participation. Furthermore, in a number of countries, women are still prohibited from accessing certain public spaces—this includes sport fields (Brady, 2005; Cesari, 2012). Women continue to increase access to equal opportunities in many Western countries, yet the ways they are disadvantaged in social practice has become more subtle and hidden (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Gendered social practices remained mainly because many social structures are built by men and for men. Changing the gendered culture of social structures is necessary (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Still, it is important for individual women to gain control over their own lives to be able to make a change in gendered social practices that impact them personally and to keep from being disadvantaged in their own lives.

Sport could be a means of gaining such control (Blinde et al., 2001; Brady, 2005). Participating in sport can impact participants, and generate and empower personal change in their lives. The change can be both positive and negative. Many studies on personal outcomes of sport participation have pervasively assumed that all sport participation experiences are the same (Chalip, 2006). Studies have attempted to associate sport participation positively with pro-social behaviors and negatively with anti-social

behaviors by comparing those who did and did not participate in sports. However, the results often found no or only partial associations. The associations of sport participation and social behaviors appeared to be inconsistent because the sport participation among the subjects varied (McCormack & Chalip, 1988). Even though they had similar programs, participants tended to interpret their experiences differently and thus the outcomes varied based on their previous life experiences or characteristics. For these reasons, it cannot be assumed that sport participation provides the same experiences and benefits to all participants regardless of the program setting (Chalip, 2006; Green, 2008; McCormack & Chalip, 1988).

Several studies have demonstrated that sport has the capacity to be a tool to generate personal change for girls or women. Studies on women's sport participation (Blinde et al., 2001; Theberge, 1987; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) have suggested that females who actively participate in sport have gained a sense of competence, confidence, independence, and control over their bodies and lives. Other studies (Brady, 2005; Green, 2001; Reid, Frisby, & Ponc, 2002) have implied that participating in sport can, by helping them develop life skills, empower women (e.g., female student athletes, amateur athletes, low income women, and girls in developing countries) and provide access to public spaces and a safe place for them to be themselves. This is especially true if their activity is contrary to existing gender norms and expectations.

Conversely, sport is not always empowering, safe, or confidence-building. Sport experiences can also reinforce the traditional gender roles and expectations and make women feel powerless. In some contexts, female participants who recognized the conflict

of gender expectations of themselves as women and as athletes decided to conform to social expectations by either dropping out from sports, or feminizing their appearance or behaviors (Brace-Govan, 2004; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). In other cases, women used participating in sport as resistance, attempting to change other people's perceptions and persuading them to refrain from stereotyping women (Shaw, 2001; Theberge, 2000).

The inconsistent effects of women's sport experience support the arguments of Chalip (2006) and Green (2008). These authors argue that sport experiences are not all the same, nor do they "naturally" result in positive outcomes. Despite several studies on women's empowerment through sport participation, the information is scattered and neglects to identify the contextual elements of their sport experience that affect empowerment (or disempowerment) in their lives and how sport can be such a catalyst for personal change.

This study utilizes, in unpacking these issues, Zimmerman's Psychological Empowerment framework (1990; 1995). The framework provides useful insights of the processes through which individuals are empowered, the variations of experience that empower individuals, and outcomes of empowering experiences. According to studies in various fields (e.g., Anderson & Funnell, 2010; Kar, Pascual, & Chickering, 1999; Schutt & Rogers, 2009; Zimmerman, Stewart, Morrel-Samuels, Franzen, & Reischl, 2011; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Rosa, & Castro, 1997; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), an empowering process can occur when a program provides participants with a safe space and an experience that can increase their perceived control and competence, that can help them gain knowledge and skills, and encourage them to engage in collective activities.



Feminist scholars have also argued that for women the process of critical awareness is important; through consciousness-raising women can connect their disadvantaged experiences with those of other women, and thus see the sociopolitical dimensions of their personal problems (Carr, 2003). Based on the literature review and framework, this study aims to explore any changes in daily life, particularly behavioral changes, of participants through participating in sport. The second purpose of this study is to identify empowering and disempowering mechanisms and outcomes from sport participation, especially for non-elite athletes.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **SPORT FOR PERSONAL CHANGE**

Sport has the capacity to generate and empower personal change through participation (Green, 2008). The change can be both positive and negative (Chalip, 2006). While sport has long been believed to contribute to social development of individuals, particularly youth, it can also affect participants negatively. In order to identify the personal change that sport participation can potentially generate, the literature on how sport participation experience affects participants' lives beyond physical benefits was examined.

Before reviewing the sport literature, sport needed to be defined. This study employed the broad definition of sport, including “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction (UN Sport for Development and Peace)” for the development purpose.

The impact of sport participation has been discussed in various disciplines including sport development, sport and leisure management, physical education, education, sport sociology, and sport psychology. According to the literature, participating in sport is associated with positive and negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of participants. The literature has demonstrated how sport can impact personal change in at least two ways. First, sport can be used to enhance development of pro-social attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and life skills. Second, sport can be a tool to reduce anti-social behaviors such as criminal behaviors and risky health behaviors.

Sport has been used to develop a myriad of pro-social behaviors and life skills (Eley & Kirk, 2002; Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, & Presbrey, 2004; Weiss, 2008; Wright & Côté, 2003). In research of developmental psychology, for example, participating in a sport program that was intentionally designed to enhance certain life skills achieved the intended positive outcomes (e.g., engagement in school and community activities, improvement of academic performance and graduation rate) (Petitpas et al., 2004). Sport, in another intentionally organized program, was shown to facilitate the development of emotional regulation, personal/social responsibility, and self-efficacy for risk resistance (Weiss, 2008). Studies also have suggested that sport participation experience can foster leadership skills through gaining citizenship and positive peer relationships (Eley & Kirk, 2002; Wright & Côté, 2003). Moreover, participating in sport has been shown to develop social skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, competence, and self-control (Blinde et al., 2001; Côté, 2002).

However, sport participation does not seem to generate pro-social behaviors automatically. For example, student athletes who participated in any Division I collegiate sport do not necessarily perform as well as other students in academic classes (Maloney & McCormick, 1993). Furthermore, even though studies have demonstrated participating in any school sport improves academic performance, the improvement is often trivial or temporary (Taras, 2005; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008). Some researchers have also suggested that good academic performance of student athletes might not be the result of sport participation (Rees, Howell, & Miracle, 1990). Rather, high academic achievers

could be more likely to be involved in sport. Therefore, it is not certain that sport participation necessarily leads to high academic performance.

In addition to increasing pro-social behaviors, sport has also been used to decrease or prevent anti-social behaviors. In a series of studies, Hartmann and colleagues have attempted to show a capacity of sport for facilitating to reduce criminal behaviors (Hartmann, 2003; Hartmann & Massoglia, 2007). The premise of their studies was that sport can serve as a distraction from anti-social behaviors when organized well (Hartmann, 2003). If young people had a positive outlet for their time and energy, they would play sport and not commit crimes. Moreover, sport participation has been associated with decrease of substance abuse, suicidal behaviors, and risky sexual behaviors (Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Sabo, Miller, Melnick, Farrell, & Barnes, 2005). It has also been used to reduce risky sexual behaviors and prevent AIDS/HIV for young people in Africa (Clark, Friedrich, Ndlovu, Neilands, & McFarland, 2006; Maro, Roberts, & Sorensen, 2009).

However, sport participation is not always associated with positive outcomes, but with mixed or neutral results particularly in studies that simply compared students who participated in *any* sport with those who did not. For example, Hartmann and Massoglia (2007) found those who participated in *any* high school sport were involved in fewer shopliftings, but more drunk-driving in their adulthood than those who did not. Other similar studies reported no significant relationship between sport participation and delinquency (Miller, Melnick, Barnes, Sabo, & Farrell, 2007), substance use (Eitle, Turner, & Eitle, 2003) or suicidal behaviors (Sabo et al., 2005). These studies examined

participation in *any* sport program — intentionally organized or not — thus it makes sense that the results were mixed, and that sport did not automatically have a positive effect on the participants' lives.

Unfortunately, despite its capacity for positive outcomes, sport has even been linked to negative outcomes. For example, sport participation can increase the tendency of violence and aggression for its young participants in both professional and amateur sport (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012). The violence and aggression can occur on and off field among sport participants or people around sport (e.g., parents, coaches, fans). The violence is more likely to appear within traditionally masculine sport and often considered acceptable or inevitable in sport context (Messner, 2007). It is believed to be due to competitive and winning-driven culture of sport (Thornton, et al., 2012). Furthermore, sport participation appeared to be associated with other anti-social behaviors such as increased alcohol use (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Eitle et al., 2003) and higher risk of sexual behavior (Miller et al., 1999). It might be because participating in sport as a group provided young people with a chance to gather for anti-social behaviors and succumb to peer pressure (Miller et al., 1999).

According to the studies, the association of sport and social behaviors has appeared to be positive, neutral, or negative. This finding invalidates the assumption that sport is good so sport participation naturally provides the benefits to participants. While participating in sport programs designed intentionally for the development of social behaviors can result in the positive associations and outcomes of sport, participating in any sport is not necessarily associated with positive change of the participants. Therefore,

we cannot assume that providing just any sport program would automatically generate positive outcomes. Rather, how to organize and implement an intentional sport program matters (Chalip, 2006; Green, 2008; Weiss, 2008).

In fact, many studies on personal outcomes of sport participation have pervasively assumed that all sport participation experiences are the same (Chalip, 2006). The studies have attempted to associate sport participation positively with pro-social behaviors and negatively with anti-social behaviors by comparing those who participated in sports in the past and those who did not. However, the results often found partial or no associations. The associations of sport participation and social behaviors appeared inconsistent because the sport participation among the subjects might vary. For example, all experiences of participating in varsity sports may be assumed similar, but, in reality, participation experiences can be very different depending on coaches' coaching style, or relationship with peers (McCormack & Chalip, 1988). Even though they had similar programs, participants tend to interpret their experiences differently thus the outcomes may vary. For these reasons, it cannot be assumed that sport participation would provide the same experiences and benefits to all participants regardless of the program setting, which is consistent with the current arguments of some researchers (Chalip, 2006; Green, 2008; McCormack & Chalip, 1998).

#### **Four Components to Catalyze Personal Change**

From this broad literature base, in organizing and implementing a sport program at least four components need to be considered, to catalyze a positive change of individuals through sport participation; intentionality, integration with social support

system, positive social interaction and experience, and underlying values and culture of the program.

### ***Intentionality of Program***

The studies have demonstrated that intentionally planning and implementing a sport program to generate positive outcomes is essential to achieving those positive outcomes. While random sport programs did not consistently affect positive changes on participants (Eccles et al., 2003; Eitle et al., 2003; Miller et al., 1999; Sabo et al., 2005), intentionally planned and implemented programs were able to lead to at least some positive personal changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. For example, the sport programs that were intentionally organized for preventing AIDS/HIV (Clark et al., 2006; Maro et al., 2009), promoting academic benefits (Olushola, Jones, Dixon, & Green, 2012; Petitpas et al., 2004), or learning life skills (Weiss, 2008) successfully achieved their goals. Particularly, studies have reported that the programs organized with sport were more effective for HIV education and decrease of risky sexual behaviors than programs without sport (Clark et al., 2006; Maro et al., 2009). Moreover, the effect of using sport was larger when strategies were implemented carefully by coaches (Maro et al., 2009).

### ***Integration with Core Service and Social Support***

A promising finding from a number of studies was that adding social support and services to the sport experience could generate positive outcomes by providing educational resources and a positive social network for the participants (Hartmann, 2003; Hartmann & Depro, 2006; Maro et al., 2009; Olushola et al., 2012). For example, delivering an educational and social support system such as mentoring or bonding

activities along with sport was essential to render long-term academic benefits for high school girls (Olushola et al., 2012). Moreover, connecting homeless sport programs with various social supports (e.g., rehabilitation, arrangement for education, work or housing) was crucial to achieve positive changes and reengage the participants in their broader lives (Magee, 2011; Sherry, 2010).

The sport programs planned and implemented with the involvement of teachers, coaches, parents, and community members seemed to result in more positive effects than stand-alone sport programs. Not only involvement of community members in planning (Maro et al., 2006) but also community support of resources and publicity of a program (Hartmann & Depro, 2006) are necessary for successful reduction of anti-social behaviors. The evidence from studies was consistent with “sport as a hook” philosophy where sport does not actually create the change but works to draw participants into educational services and social supports (Green, 2008; Hartmann, 2003). In those sport-based programs, the system that provides educational resources and services (e.g., AIDS information, tutoring, mentoring) could successfully bridge the participants to the personal change intended through the program.

### ***Positive Social Interaction and Experiences***

Positive social interactions and experiences before, during, and after the program play a significant role in creating positive personal change (Green, 2008). Positive interactions such as courage from instructors, friendship and camaraderie with colleagues, and positive feedback and support from family members and friends facilitated increasing pro-social attitudes and behaviors and decreasing anti-social



behaviors (Bailey, 2006; Green, 2008; Hartmann, 2003; Taras, 2005). It is argued that improved academic performance and skill development through sport programs tend to be mediated by the positive interactions (Bailey, 2006). On the contrary, a negative coaching style or relationship with peers in sport programs did not appear to lead to beneficial outcomes (McCormack & Chalip, 1988) but rather an increase in violence or deviance in youth (Thornton et al., 2012).

### ***Underlying Value and Culture of Program***

The underlying value and culture of the sport program contribute greatly to the positive outcome of their participants (Olushola et al., 2012). The sport-based programs that pursued value of young people's education could succeed to enlighten them and improve academic performance (e.g., Hartmann, 2003; Olushola et al., 2012; Petitpas et al., 2004). Conversely, if a program merely emphasized winning and competition regardless of other educational qualities and values, it is more likely to promote violence and aggression of participants (Thornton et al., 2012). Therefore, as the design of a sport program with valuable intention is important, underlying value and culture of the program need to be consistently considered in planning and implementing (Chalip, 2006; Olushola et al., 2012).

In summary, the literature has shown that participating in sport can generate positive attitudes and behavioral outcomes when it is intentionally designed based on positive value, integrates with 'core' services and support, and provides positive interactions experiences consistently with the pursuing values. Based on this literature, it is found that most of the studies using sport for personal change and development have

focused on youth and adolescents. However, the positive changes can be created through sport in other ages as well (Baker, Fraser-Thomas, Dionigi, & Horton, 2010). Although the movement of using sport for development is growing worldwide, most adult sport programs do not seem to be designed with intentions of personal development and positive impact on their everyday lives. Rather, many programs may focus on weight loss, physical fitness, or socializing (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006). Furthermore, there is little information available about how they do or do not produce any change on adult participants. According to the studies on youth, sport has a capacity to create these changes if it is intentionally designed accordingly with value they like to pursue, is integrated with social support and service, and provides positive interactions. Therefore, it is possible that the four components above that affect generating positive change of individuals through sport participation could be applied in designing sport for development and change for adults, particularly women.

## **SPORT EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN**

In spite of its male-dominant environment, sport has been shown to have the capacity as a tool to generate positive outcomes for female participants as well (Blinde et al., 1994, 2001; Brandy, 2005; Reid et al., 2002). Sport experiences have been shown to facilitate female participants having better self-concepts such as self-esteem and body image, which may lead other senses of psychological and mental well-being (Blinde et al., 2001; Reid et al., 2002). Moreover, sport provides an opportunity for female participants to develop particular life skills (e.g., confidence) that traditionally women

lack and can gain personal and group empowerment (Blinde et al., 1994, 2001). Sport can also offer a safe place for girls or women to socialize with other women and be themselves despite their perceptions of themselves and their sport activities as unconventional and thus against the gender norms of broader society (Brandy, 2005; Green, 2001).

However, women's sport experiences and outcomes may not always be positive. Rather, women's sport experiences have often been limited and have affected their lives negatively by reflecting and reproducing society's gender binary. Sport, even in leisure spheres, is known as an area "in which women experience most discrimination and harassment" (Aitchison, 2005, p. 432). This results from the prevalently masculine culture and gendered practices. Nonetheless, when organized appropriately, sport may be an efficient way to gain desirable attitudes or behaviors and achieve individual and social development for women (Yang, 2013).

Creating a positive impact for women is needed if they are to be aided in overcoming some of the disadvantages they face at school, in the workplace, or at home. Women have often experienced different treatment and expectations regarding their ability and capability having been evaluated based on gender. To overcome these disadvantages, women need to be empowered – to be aware of unfair treatment and expectations and to gain control over the situation in which they find themselves. A driving force that brings about personal or social change is a sense of empowerment (Lord & Hutchison, 1993). This sense of empowerment can be gained, it has been shown, through sport. Certain attributes such as confidence and independence that have

traditionally been lacking in women are essential to gaining control. These attributes can be obtained through a well-organized sport experience (Blinde et al., 2001).

Furthermore, it is necessary to focus on women's experience because women may perceive and interpret sport experience differently from men. These varying perceptions could affect how programs should be designed to meet specific needs for women. Giuliano, Popp, and Knight (2000) argued that males "receive unequivocal support from society and from significant others to participate in sport throughout their lives" (p. 161). Meanwhile, females get differential treatment and exposure to gender-stereotyped sport, which "imply that females may be influenced to participate in sports more indirectly and in more subtle ways than are males" (p. 161). Women's accessibility to sport activities is often more limited than it is for men. Such access includes limited activity choices available for women or less time and money for themselves (Dixon, 2009).

Studies have also shown that many female participants become aware, through interactions within the sport context, of how expectations and treatment of them differ from those of men (Brace-Govan, 2004; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Thus, the studies confirm that women's sport experiences and interpretations can be distinctive from men. This implies that the sport experiences that lead to empowerment may differ for women and the quality of empowerment they might gain from their sport experience could differ from that of men. Furthermore, women's sport experience may vary depending on their intersectionality of other cultural identities such as race, ethnicity, social class, nationality, and sexual identity (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Sport experience can also differ based on the level of involvement and intention to participate (Dixon, 2009; Wheaton &

Tomlinson, 1998). Therefore, investigation is needed on how the variations of sport participation experiences of women affect the individuals and their lives.

In order to organize a sport program to provide positive and empowering experiences for women, it is essential to gain a vital understanding of the various experiences that women interpret as both empowering and disempowering. The literature (e.g., Blinde et al., 1994, 2001; Brandy, 2005; Reid et al., 2002) has demonstrated that sport has a capacity, in various ways, to both empower and disempower women. Several experiences and outcomes of women's sport participation related to empowerment include personal empowerment, provision of a safe space, change in body perception, awareness of gender prejudice, resistance, bonding and social networking, and social empowerment.

### **Personal Empowerment**

Sport, by developing skills and attitudes women need in their lives, has helped some women gain personal empowerment. Blinde et al. (2000) argued that sport facilitated the development of female athletes' life skills and led to personal empowerment in spite of a male-dominated system and environment. They found that participating in certain elite sports could empower women individually by developing life skills and qualities that some women have traditionally lacked: bodily competence, competence of self, and a proactive approach to life. Other studies on women's sport participation (Brace-Govan, 2004; Theberge, 1987; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) supported the notion that females who actively participated in sport were able to gain a sense of competence, confidence, independence, and control over their bodies and lives.

The empowering experiences that made female athletes feel more confident or independent were shown mainly to be the physicality and bodily competence, and goal-achieving and committing aspects of sport. Studies (Blinde et al., 2001; Brace-Govan, 2004; Theberge, 1987, 2000) have argued that female athletes gained positive self-perceptions and control over their bodies and lives by using their bodies consistently and gaining physical strength through sport. Besides the physicality of sport, the hard-working and goal-achieving aspects of sport also have enabled active female participants to gain a sense of confidence, independence, and control (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Commitment-centered subcultures have also facilitated committed women to feel more independent and empowered as they were treated based on proficiency and commitment in the sport, not based on gender (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998).

Furthermore, certain female participants, specifically those with low economical or social status, can feel empowered simply by gaining access to sport. Opportunities for accessible leisure sport programs have enabled low-income women to gain a sense of inclusion and involvement in their community (Reid et al., 2002). For girls in some developing countries (e.g., Egypt, Kenya), having access to sport programs may be perceived as gaining more mobility and access to public spaces, otherwise they were not socially allowed in public spaces (Brady, 2005). Participating in sport programs can provide females in these contexts opportunities to gain more accessibility and exposure to public spaces, which further contribute to changing perceptions of boys, their family members, and of females' general mobility and capability.

### **Provision of a Safe Space**

Participating in certain sports can provide a safe space—physically and psychologically—for girls or women to be themselves even though they and their activities are generally perceived as unconventional (Brady, 2005; Green, 2001). In Brady's study, venturing out into the public sphere was considered dangerous and undignified for African girls, yet a sport-based program offered a safe place for the girls to enjoy freedom of expression and movement as well as to develop new and valued life skills. The program site was not only physically safe from crime but also psychologically safe for the girls to achieve education and development, which is uncommon in those countries.

Sport has also served certain female athletes in the U.S. who played a traditionally masculine sport (i.e., football, hockey). It provided them a space to enjoy what they had a passion for and celebrate their identity as players of that sport (Green, 2001; Theberge, 2000). For a long time, females playing masculine sports have been considered quite inadequate and unconventional. Nevertheless, the female players in the studies felt accepted to play on their teams by sharing their experiences (Theberge, 2000) and celebrating themselves as female football players at their tournament (Green, 2001).

### **Change in Perceptions of Body**

Women's physical experience in sport can be a means of both empowerment and disempowerment. Developing physical skills and gaining bodily competence in sport may promote personal empowerment (Blinde et al., 2001). It has been also believed that sport participation is associated with body image. Participating in endurance sports or

fitness activities was found to be associated positively with body image or physical self-esteem of girls and women (Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill, & Jones, 2004; Scott & Derry, 2005). However, despite the common belief, the effect of sport on body image is inconclusive and contradictory. Researchers found that participating in sport can also have a negative effect on women's perceptions of their bodies (Howells & Grogan, 2012; Littleton & Ollendick, 2003; Parsons & Betz, 2001). Howells and Grogan (2012) found that competitive swimming negatively affected body image and promoted body dissatisfaction of adolescents. They believed that participating in the sport enhanced muscular development, a conflict with the cultural ideal of an unrealistic thin body (Bordo, 2003).

Moreover, participants in aesthetic (e.g., gymnastics, synchronized swimming) and weight-dependent sports (e.g., wrestling) were more likely to have negative perceptions of their bodies and suffer from eating disorders (Parsons & Betz, 2001; Littleton & Ollendick, 2003). Particularly, the appearance-promoting atmosphere in certain sport settings can affect negative perceptions of the body. When female participants sensed the atmosphere in a gym, they felt it unfriendly and were intimidated to be there and exercise, especially for those whose primary motivation was health rather than appearance (Dixon, 2009). Seeing thin and toned bodies at a gym decreased their body satisfaction and self-esteem and further discouraged their continued participation.

Perceptions of body may depend on how female participants perceive themselves because the ideal body depends on the social context (Kane et al., 2001). When they consider themselves as athletes, whether amateur or professional, they tend to desire a



strong, muscular body in order to achieve their athletic goals. However, when they consider themselves as culturally female, they constantly compare their bodies to the cultural ideal body, feeling unacceptable and dissatisfied (Howells & Grogan, 2012). Therefore, the perceptions of body can be transient and dependent on the social context while bodily experience can affect such perceptions.

### **Awareness of Gender Prejudice**

For empowerment of women, the process of critical awareness is considered to play an important part (Carr, 2003). Feminists have argued that becoming critically conscious of one's reality and power inequalities is a key to empowering women (Stromquist, 2002). They suggested through consciousness-raising, women would be able to connect their disadvantaged experiences with those of other women, and thus see the sociopolitical dimensions of their personal problems (Carr, 2003).

Sport can also provide a space to promote a person's awareness and interpretation of the sociopolitical environment surrounding participants. Indeed, sport fields can reflect other aspects of culture and society (Coakley, 2001). Particularly, sport can be a space for participants to become aware of the gendered culture in sport fields and broader societies. Many organized sports considered mainstream (e.g., football, baseball, and hockey) have been dominated by males and emphasized masculinity (Meessner, 2007). Women who venture into these sports can have their eyes opened, through their interactions, to the gendered culture of sport and also of society.

This kind of women's experience can occur in various sports, from those perceived as traditionally masculine (e.g., weightlifting, martial arts) to those considered

alternative (e.g., windsurfing) and that may be more gender-neutral. For example, women weightlifters had “epiphanic moments” (p. 506) in that they recognized the conflict of gender expectations of women and the sport (i.e., weightlifting). What was revealed to them was the fact that strong and powerful physicality was expected to be male and was associated with domination over others (Brace-Govan, 2004). These illuminative moments, brought on by the effect of reactions from their friends and families, raised their awareness that strength and muscularity was not suitable for women. Moreover, by experiencing interactions with other men and women at the gyms, they recognized that certain gyms were male spaces and they needed to pretend to be masculine to fit in there.

On the other hand, alternative sports, such as windsurfing, are considered postmodern and have a differentiated culture from traditionally masculine sports, emphasizing values such as individuality, freedom, or hedonism instead of masculine values such as aggression or toughness. Therefore, it is assumed that the gender relations and structure will be different here (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Nonetheless, even in these sports, female participants sensed gendered expectation and treatment from other female and male members (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). They were expected to be feminine in appearance and inferior in performance.

Depending on their involvement or experience in a sport, women may vary in how they react to the gendered expectation and treatment. For example, they might exhibit resistance or perhaps reaffirmation (Brace-Govan, 2004; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). Female participants who became aware of gender roles and expectations of women may conform to those expectations, for example quitting the sport, or feminizing

themselves, instead of resisting, attempting to change other people's perceptions, or persuading the naysayers to refrain from stereotyping women. However, studies also found that while some women's lack of involvement and passivity conformed to traditional gender roles and expectations, actively participating women were more conscious of the gendered circumstances and resisted the social expectations.

### **Resistance**

Through participating in sport, women have resisted male-dominant aspect of sport and society (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; Kane, 1995; Shaw, 2001). Resistance is often considered an act of a minority group to challenge the power relations of social stratifications such as gender. The resistance of women is also deemed "to occur when women adopt behaviors or express themselves through activities which provide personal empowerment and which, at the same time, reflect a challenge to dominant, restrictive or constraining views of femininity, sexuality, or motherhood" (Shaw, 2001, p.191).

Women in sport may, by participating, resist the male dominance of the sport itself. Female participants have not been welcomed in masculine sports because the expectation of them (i.e., femininity) is contradictory to the culture of the sport (i.e., masculinity). However, women in some studies (Green, 2001; Noad & James, 2003; Theberge, 2000) have challenged such constraints and pursued what they desired. Female participants in male-dominated sports have had to struggle for their equal opportunity, access, and systematic or social support to play. They challenged the notion that the sports were for men and that women were unwelcome.

The studies of Green (2001) and Theberge (2000) did not specify the women's participation in traditionally masculine sport as resistance. Their results, however, imply that female participants challenged society's perceptions of women in masculine sports. Not identified as resisting, these women challenged society's notion by continuing their participation and developing their own identity as female football or ice hockey players.

In addition to persisting in a masculine sport, women may resist by transforming its culture (Kane, 1995). Women in some studies rejected the emphasis on masculine values (e.g., competition, winning) and integrated feminine values (e.g., process-oriented, collective, inclusive, supportive). A female group also constructed their own group culture to continue the participation because the masculine culture of the sport was one of the constraints to their participation (Wood & Danylchuk, 2012).

Women's resistance against a male-dominated attitude and culture in sport can also be extended beyond sport fields. One woman's resistance influences other women's resisting behaviors or inspires other women to challenge traditional assumptions regarding femininity and masculinity in daily life (Shaw, 2001). For example, the resistance can be extended to challenging gendered behaviors, gendered treatments, appearance expectations, and gendered inequality in the provision of opportunities and activities. Women's resistance through sport and leisure activities may result in personal empowerment and psychological and developmental benefits—enhanced sense of self, development of new self-affirming identities, and increased feelings of self worth (Shaw, 2001).

## **Bonding and Social Networking**

Sport is known to facilitate female bonding and developing a group identity as female athletes and social networks for participants (Blinde et al., 1994; Brady, 2005; Green, 2001; Reid et al., 2002). This takes place through the sharing of common goals and experiences as a group both in teams and individual sports. The collegiate athletes could build social networks with professionals (Blinde et al., 1994) and leisure participants could meet and socialize with other women (Reid et al., 2002). Furthermore, sport provided an opportunity for girls or women to socialize with others who similarly participate in unconventional activities. As a result, they felt not only okay about playing for their teams or leagues but also accepted by witnessing other women and sharing their experiences (Green, 2001; Theberge, 2000).

## **Social Empowerment**

Feminists often emphasize its significance, but social change or empowerment of women generated through sport has received scant attention. This might be because it is difficult to document social change and to observe over time the actual change of people's behaviors (Blinde et al., 1994; Shaw, 2001). Moreover, most sport programs for development or change have focused on personal change, not social change or revolution (Theberge, 2000). Women's participation in sport is believed to help enhance society's perception of women's capability and physical skills. Female athletes do seem aware of the unfairness of women's sport within their particular context, yet such awareness seems to stop short of recognizing the differential treatment of women in broader social contexts (Blinde et al., 1994). Even women who play traditionally masculine sports, such as ice

hockey or football (Green, 2001; Theberge, 2000), and are aware they are not following the expected gender norms did not seem to try to convert or transform the gender norms to broader society. “They are about playing hockey not ‘social transformation’” (Theberge, 2000, p. 91). The sport programs were never intended to bring about social change.

Most feminist researchers argue that social resistance or collective actions are more salient and effective at delivering social change to gender differentiations and women’s disadvantages. However, gaining personal empowerment and awareness are also essential to contributing to a positive change in individuals. People who become aware of gender inequality may try to make a subtle change in their daily lives, which may contribute to altering gender distortion in society (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Furthermore, social resistance and radical social actions to change the current gender norms and expected roles can cause a backlash for the men and women who want to keep and conform them in society. Therefore, making a personal change can be an effective small step to achieving social change. It is on this notion that this study intended to focus.

## **THEORIES OF EMPOWERMENT**

The empowerment construct is used pervasively in various fields, including community psychology, public health, and management. Among the various manifestations, two that have been predominantly utilized are Rappaport’s concept of empowerment (1987) and Zimmerman’s framework (1995). Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as the process by which people, organizations, and communities gain

control over issues that they are concerned with. Zimmerman and his colleagues investigated the construct further, and developed a framework (e.g. Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000; Zimmerman et al., 1992). According to them, empowerment is a construct consisting of three levels—individual, organizational, and community. All the levels are interrelated, but the individual-level empowerment can be fundamental to achieving organizational or community empowerment.

### **Psychological Empowerment Framework**

According to Zimmerman (1990), empowerment at the individual-level of analysis is referred to as Psychological Empowerment. He argued that empowerment at the individual-level calls for an individual to have a critical understanding of her environment and participatory behaviors in the life or community beyond the psychological intrapersonal constructs (Zimmerman, 1990). Zimmerman's Psychological Empowerment framework (1995) provides useful insights into the processes through which individuals are empowered, the variations of experience that empower individuals, and outcomes of empowering experiences. Psychological Empowerment, empowerment at the individual-level, is defined as a process by which individuals 1) perceive and gain control over personal issues (Rappaport, 1978), 2) understand their environment critically, and 3) take actions to influence the issues in their lives or communities (Zimmerman, 1990).

Zimmerman's framework (1995) for individual-level empowerment consists of three components (Figure 1): 1) intrapersonal (domain-specific perceived control, motivation to control, and perceived competence), 2) interactional (a critical awareness of

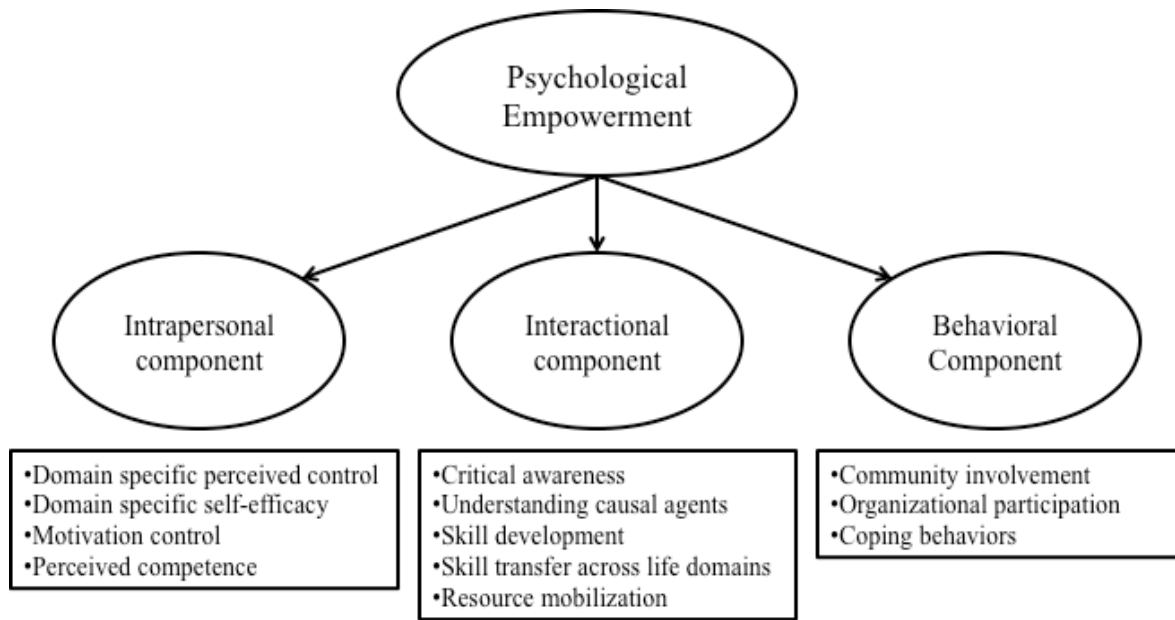


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Psychological Empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 588)

sociopolitical environment, understanding of causal agents and options, and developing needed skills), and 3) behavioral (participatory or coping behaviors). Based on the three components of PE, an empowered person may believe that she has the capability to influence a given context, understand how the system works in that context, and engage in behaviors to exert control in the context (Zimmerman, 1995).

According to studies from various fields (e.g., Anderson & Funnell, 2010; Kar et al., 1999; Schutt & Rogers, 2009; Zimmerman, 1997; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman et al., 2011), empowerment is not gained naturally. An empowering process can occur when a program provides participants with a safe space and an experience that can increase perceived control and competence, yield knowledge and skills, and allow



one to engage in collective activities (Zimmerman, 1995). A sport program is empowering when it nurtures the empowering process and helps participants gain the cognitive and behavioral skills necessary to critically understand social environments and become independent problem solvers and decision makers. To enhance empowerment, program organizers need to deliberately implement and provide the empowering experiences in a program (Zimmerman, 2000).

An assumption of Psychological Empowerment is that it may vary for different people, across different life domains (e.g., family, work, or recreation), and over time. The importance of each component can also vary. For women, feminists have argued the process of critical awareness is important (Carr, 2003). Through consciousness-raising, women can connect their disadvantaged experiences with those of other women, and thus see the sociopolitical dimensions of their personal problems (Stromquist, 2002).

Because Psychological Empowerment can vary in different settings, it is necessary to investigate and add more cases in order to understand the process in-depth and obtain measurements or evaluation that can be more generally used (Zimmerman, 2000). Therefore, we need to examine and identify what are the PE process and outcomes in the context of sport participation. Even in sport participation context, Psychological Empowerment can vary in different sports, settings, or demographics of participants. Furthermore, because the Psychological Empowerment is variable across different life domains (Zimmerman, 1995), the empowerment that is gained in a sport setting may not naturally transit to other domains of participants' lives. Zimmerman also argued that the high level of Psychological Empowerment could be expected when a person can

generalize skills across life domains. Therefore, in order to maximize Psychological Empowerment, it is necessary to catalyze the transfer of skills across life domains.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the review of literature, the intentional design of a sport program built upon a vital understanding of empowerment principles and variations of experiences is essential to create the empowerment desired for women. However, in order to do so, investigation is needed on how their sport experience has empowered and/or disempowered them and how it affects their daily lives. Understanding the variations of women's sport experience will provide an implication on what kinds of sport experience are needed to design a sport program empowering women. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) How did sport experiences affect female participants and their daily lives both positively and negatively? 2) If the sport experiences empowered or disempowered female participants, what are the elements of sport experiences that empower or disempower female participants?

## **Chapter 3: Method**

The study utilized an interpretive approach to understanding women's experiences in sport (Creswell, 2013). As such, the basic goal was to garner a picture of women's sport experiences from their perspectives and in their own terms and to understand how sport experiences relate to empowerment. In-depth personal interviews are well suited for capturing these experiences as well as their subjective meanings (Creswell, 2013).

### **SELECTION OF NATION**

For this research, I focused on native Korean women who were born and have resided in South Korea. South Korea was selected because it is a nation where women and men are, according to tradition, valued differently. Therefore, life and sport experiences are typically quite different for women and men (Renshaw, 2011).

South Korea, over the last two decades, has developed economically in dramatic fashion and, socially, has westernized. Nevertheless, women continue to generally be undervalued due to its long Confucian tradition and its patrilineal societal system (Renshaw, 2011). Recently, though, the perception of women has begun to change and the patrilineal system reformed. However, because the Confucian philosophy and patrilineal system have been so long embedded in Korean society, women's status is not so easily changed. Thus, most of the traditional values regarding Korean women still remain.

According to the Gender Gap Report 2013, out of 136 countries, South Korea was ranked as 111<sup>th</sup> while the U.S and Canada were 23<sup>rd</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> respectively. Similar to a majority of other countries, South Korea has, over the last eight years, made slow progress in closing the gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2013). The report revealed large gaps concerning gender in the realms of economy, education, health, and politics in South Korea. Furthermore, the Gender Empowerment Measure 2008 (i.e., an index of *women's* ratio on political, economical, and educational participation, and earned income) ranked South Korea as 61<sup>st</sup> out of 109 countries while the Human Development Index (i.e., an index of education, health, and living standards for *overall* population) ranked it 26<sup>th</sup> (out of 182 countries). These reports demonstrate that despite the country's many economic gains, the reports chronicle how, in many instances, women across the region continue to be held back and disadvantaged. Even as many women have benefited from their country's improved education, health, and prosperity, they continue to face significant barriers to the same opportunities available to men (UNDP, 2009).

## **INSTRUMENT**

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. Interviews consisted of five parts (see Appendix A). The interviews were based on Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) critical incident approach (see also Dixon & Warner, 2010). This approach is effective for the current study because the line of questions allow for detailed descriptions of interviewees' lived experiences—experiences both positive and negative. The questions, furthermore, were designed to help ascertain the participants' own

perceptions of the effects of those positive and negative experiences on their overall experience and personal life (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The first and second parts of the interview gathered the backgrounds of respondents and their sport participation experience. The first question was a broad request of demographic background, asking, “Tell me a little bit about yourself.” Follow-up questions and probes were used to understand their background, including age, education, marital status, occupation, and residing region. The second segment of the interview focused on respondents’ backgrounds in sport participation. Probes were used to understand type (e.g., individual, team), level (e.g., elite, leisure), and length of their participation in sport.

The third segment of the interview asked respondents to describe their sport participation experience that they thought strengthened them or their capability. Probes were used to elicit discussion regarding the surrounding circumstances in which those experiences occurred, such as elements and structure of sport activities and interaction with people. For example, probes included “What circumstances led to your feeling in this way?” and “How long did you feel this way?” Further probes were included to elicit how their experiences have impacted their daily lives and how they possibly changed their cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of life. Then, the same question and probes were repeated in order to draw out, if they have them, multiple experiences that possibly empowered the respondents in sport participation.

The fourth segment of the interview asked respondents to discuss their sport participation experience that they thought weakened them or their capability. Probes were

used to discuss the surrounding circumstances in which those experiences occurred. Further probes were included to elicit how they felt and how long they felt that way. Probes also consisted of how those experiences in sport have impacted their daily life and how they possibly changed their cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of life. Again, the same questions were repeated to capture multiple incidents of disempowering experience. Lastly, respondents were asked how they would design a sport program to enhance the positive experience that could strengthen them or their capabilities. Probes were used to elicit discussions regarding the important factors they deem worthy of inclusion in or exclusion from a program.

In the interviews, “strengthen one’s capability” was used in place of “empower.” In Korean, there is no single word compatible with “empower” as it is used in the context of the current study. The Korean phrase meaning “strengthen one’s capability” may be the closest term that can be used interchangeably with “empower” for this study (Korean Institute of Special Education, 2009). Further explanation of the meaning of “empower” was not provided to interviewees as it could have biased them to think of empowering experiences. Moreover, during interviews “capability” was used interchangeably with “ability” or “capacity” by researchers and interviewees in order to help interviewees understand the term better and tempt to recall their “empowering” experiences variously.

### **SAMPLING, RECRUITING AND INTERVIEWEES**

Snowball and purposeful sampling methods were used to recruit interviewees. Korean women who participate or have participated in sport, whether leisurely or

competitively, were recruited. For initial recruitment, the researcher's personal network (e.g., personal acquaintances) was utilized. Then, a snowball sampling method was used in which early respondents were asked to provide contacts for other potential interviewees. The potential interviewees were purposefully selected to ensure a variety of respondents' age, marital status, education, and occupation.

Twenty Korean women were initially recruited, and then added until the data is saturated. In total, 23 Korean women who have participated or participate in sports or physical activities were interviewed (see Table 1). The range of age was 24 to 41 ( $M=32.6$ ), which may be identified as early adulthood (Erikson, 1959; Feldman, 2013). People in this stage of life start to establish relationships with others, increase work skills, and focus on career development (Brown, 2002; Feldman, 2013). Women who lived in an urban setting were targeted for recruiting as they have more opportunities to participate in sport (Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2013). A diversity of respondents in sport participation experience, including participation activity, level, and length, was pursued in recruiting in order to capture variety of sport experience.

Among 23 interviewees, nine were married whereas fourteen were single. Among the married, six had one or two children. Four of the interviewees were homemakers. With one exception, the majority obtained at least a bachelor degree. The sports or physical activities in which they participated were various: yoga ( $n=7$ ), baseball ( $n=4$ ), soccer ( $n=4$ ), weight training ( $n=4$ ), badminton ( $n=2$ ), basketball ( $n=2$ ), futsal ( $n=2$ ), swimming ( $n=2$ ), boxing ( $n=1$ ), cycling ( $n=1$ ), hiking ( $n=1$ ), horse-riding ( $n=1$ ), running ( $n=1$ ), social dancing ( $n=1$ ), and table tennis ( $n=1$ ). Ten of the women participated in

**Table 1: Interviewee Profile**

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital (Child)</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Current sport (Length)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Gender Context</b>
JW	24	single	student	bachelor	baseball (2y)	private club	female
EK	25	single	unemployed	bachelor	basketball (4y)	private club	female
JY	26	single	employee	bachelor	baseball (2y)	private club	female
MS	26	single	employee	bachelor	weight training (1y)	gym	N/A
SB	27	single	employee	bachelor	badminton (1.5y) weight training (1y)	at work gym	co-ed co-ed
HE	27	single	employee	master	yoga (3y)	class	female
JH	28	single	employee	bachelor	yoga (1.5y) table tennis (2y)	class at work	female co-ed
YS	28	single	employee	bachelor	basketball (5y) boxing (2y)	private club class	female co-ed
MJ	28	single	grad student	bachelor	baseball (3y)	private club	female
BR	31	married	employee	bachelor	yoga (2y)	class	N/A
SJ	33	single	unemployed	bachelor	horse-riding (4y)	individual	N/A
HJ	34	single	employee	bachelor	running (6y), badminton (3y)	private club at work	co-ed co-ed
MY	34	married (1)	homemaker	bachelor	none	N/A	N/A
MH	34	married	employee	bachelor	cycling (1y), hiking (6+y)	at home individual	N/A
YJ	35	single	employee	bachelor	yoga (3y) social dance (2m)	class class	co-ed co-ed
MY	35	married (2)	homemaker	bachelor	yoga (1y), swimming (10+y)	class individual	female co-ed
JE	35	married	employee	bachelor	yoga (1y), swimming (6m)	class class	female
AR	36	single	employee	bachelor	weight training (2y) cycling (1y)	gym individual	N/A
YH	39	single	self-employed	bachelor	soccer (10+y)	public club	female
HW	40	married (2)	employee	bachelor	weight training (4y) yoga (3y)	gym class	co-ed female
YE	40	married (2)	self-employed	high school	soccer (5y)	public club	female
ES	41	married (1)	homemaker	bachelor	soccer (3y) futsal (1y)	public club public club	female co-ed
MW	41	married (1)	homemaker	bachelor	soccer (2y) futsal (1y)	public club public club	female co-ed

Child=the number of children, Gender Context=participation in settings of female-only or co-ed, female=female-only, y=year, m=month



multiple activities at the time of the interview. Twelve participated in sports in a competitive manner. To protect the private information of the interviewees, Korean pseudonyms were created and their initials were used for the data and analysis. The initials are presented in Table 1, with the demographic information.

## **PROCEDURE**

To conduct face-to-face interviews, the researcher visited South Korea. The potential interviewees were contacted to arrange the interview at convenient times and locations. The interviews lasted 50-180 minutes and respondents were asked for their voluntary written consent forms. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed. Interviewees were asked to provide their contact information in case further interviews were necessary. The second contact was made via email or Skype in order to ask additional questions and probes or to clarify their previous answers.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Interview Translation**

The interviews were transcribed in Korean by the researcher. The interview transcriptions remained in Korean in order to reduce any loss of meaning in the translation process. Then they were analyzed and coded manually into English. The interviewee quotations used in this study were translated from Korean to English. The codes, themes, and quotations were cross-checked by two Korean-English bilingual colleagues of the researcher in order to validate the translation.

According to Van Nes and colleagues, certain issues about language differences in qualitative research need to be considered when a study uses data with non-English languages but the findings are written in English (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). As translation is also an interpretive act, meaning may get lost in the translation process. The challenges of translation may include the following: 1) difficulty of finding an English word compatible in meaning and function with that of the source language, 2) problems in analyzing non-English data in English when language is considered to be an aid of thinking.

In order to reduce these challenges, during the analysis process the researcher worked as much as possible in the source language. In discussion with advisors and colleagues, the researcher used “fluid descriptions of meanings using various English formulations” (p. 315), instead of using fixed (i.e., one word) translations. For the translation of any meaningful language part in the results (e.g., labels of theme, quotes), the researcher cooperated with a professional translator in order to convey the exact meaning of the non-English resource in findings. In this way, the researcher was able to minimize any loss of meaning in the translation process and thereby enhance the validity of this study.

### **Coding Procedure**

Initial coding consisted of open and axial coding of themes interspersed with Zimmerman’s framework. Then, selective coding was conducted by delimiting coding to only sport outcomes broadly relevant to the sub-components of Zimmerman’s framework. The codes and labels were created, consistent with an interpretive approach

(Caswell, 2013), with a focus on how the sport participants understood their experiences and how they interpreted the effect of experiences on their daily lives. The data were thus condensed into codes, and these codes were then grouped into categories (Munhall, 2007). Throughout the coding process, member checks were conducted with the participants to ensure correct interpretations and conclusions.

The initial, first-order categories of outcomes of sport experiences were generated such as challenge, socializing, stress relief, confidence, work-related, efficiency, characteristics, learning, changed perception of world, and negativity. Then, through an iterative categorization process, these categories were merged into second-order categories: for example, anger management social networking with co-workers, and challenges in daily lives. The 31 second-order categories of sport outcomes were then classified according to the components and sub-components of Zimmerman's framework. Both empowering and disempowering outcomes of sport participating experiences were identified through the coding process; only ten of 31 sub-themes had the negative or disempowering aspects. After the outcomes were categorized and labeled, the elements of sport experiences or sport programs that led to the specific outcomes were identified from the interview data. The empowering and disempowering outcomes and the elements were organized according to the components and sub-components of Zimmerman's framework and are presented in Table 2 and the results section.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The results revealed that across an array of sport experiences and individual life contexts, sport could serve to empower the women. Of course, there were many instances where sport was disempowering, yet the majority of the women discussed the capacity for sport to bring empowerment and positive change to their lives.

Interestingly, the outcomes from sport manifested in sport, in other life domains, or in both. Sometimes the elements of sport that made it empowering within that domain actually worked against empowerment in other life domains and vice versa. The elements of sport experiences or sport programs that were associated with each outcome are presented in Table 2. Themes, sub-themes, outcomes and illustrative quotations for each sub-theme are included in the table.

The positive and negative outcomes were organized according to Zimmerman's framework of Psychological Empowerment theory (see Figure 1). As shown in the figure, the framework included three components: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. In addition, the data revealed at least twelve elements within those components that were needed to achieve the individual-level empowerment. The empowering outcomes were categorized according to those components and elements as presented in Table 2.

The table of results consists of the empowering or disempowering outcomes, sport outcomes, sport experience elements, and supporting quotations. The empowering outcomes represent the outcomes that were gained through sport outcomes and empowered the participants in their daily lives. The empowering outcomes are organized

according to Zimmerman's components in the table and include such categories as anger management, desire to change negativity in life, development of social skills, and challenge of gaining new skills & knowledge. The sport outcomes describe the direct outcomes of sport that affected empowering outcomes, such as sport as an outlet to relieve anger, focus on their bodies and selves, development of fellowship, and positive change in characteristics.

The sport elements are those sport experience elements that led to the sport outcomes. The examples of sport elements are focused on instruction, participation with similar others, meeting with various people, and learning new skills in sport. The quotes follow in the table and are reflective of the empowering outcomes, sport outcomes, and sport elements. The following section details the empowering outcomes, sport outcomes, and sport elements.

## **EMPOWERING OUTCOMES**

Many empowering outcomes were identified from the interview data. The empowering outcomes denote the outcomes that were gained through sport participation experiences and empowered the participants in their daily lives. The empowering outcomes are organized in the table according to Zimmerman's three components – intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components.

### **Intrapersonal Component**

The intrapersonal component refers to "how people think about themselves" (Zimmerman, 1995, p.588). The categories from interview data were classified as

domain-specific perceived control, motivations to control, and perceived competence in accordance with Zimmerman's framework (1995).

### ***Domain-specific Perceived Control***

Domain-specific perceived control refers to “beliefs about one’s ability to exert influence in different life spheres such as in family, work, or sociopolitical contexts” (Zimmerman, 1995, p.588). This sub-component includes anger management, empathy and social support, personal attention and control, and control over children. First, the participants reported that they were able to manage their anger and temper after participating in sports and physical activities. The activities allowed them to focus on instruction, movement, and their bodies. The participants also relaxed by taking advantage of ancillary services such as aromatherapy or massages after activities. Furthermore, acquiring an adequate amount of fatigue from activities and being allowed to vent to their instructors about daily life helped them relieve some frustration from work or housework. Losing weight facilitated a more positive attitude to life and made them less aggressive and cynical.

The yoga participants (YJ, HW) had an epiphanic moment after listening to their instructor console them about their daily struggles; they recognized the universality of struggle in daily life. This moment enabled participants to embrace their lives and feel more in control of their daily struggles. Moreover, participating in a traditionally masculine sport (i.e., baseball, basketball, and soccer) with other women made the participants feel comfortable to play the sport despite the perceptions it might cause in outsiders.

Sport participation enabled participants to focus, through physical movement, on their bodies and selves. It also gave them a feeling of control over themselves as they did what they wanted in spite of such conflicts that concern time, cost, or social perception of a women's non-traditional sport. Some of the participants (ES, MY) felt they gained greater control over their children after having spent quality time with them and growing closer to them.

### ***Motivation to Control***

This sub-component refers to the motivation and desire to control one's life in various spheres. According to the data, the participants desired to be less negative in life, at work, with dating, or with family. Indeed, they had seen and met co-participants from various backgrounds (e.g., occupation, education level, wealth) exemplifying a positive and passionate attitude to life. By seeing the co-participants' and sport instructor's positive attitudes towards life, the participants acknowledged the possibility that they could have positive attitudes as well. Therefore, they came to desire to control their lives to reduce negativities at home, at work, and in social life.

The participants of traditionally masculine sports desired to overcome a prevailing perception of women as being inferior to men. As they participated in these sports, they encountered negative reactions from friends, families, or co-workers. Both women and men in their lives often ignored them or prejudged them, making them feel ostracized. This motivated them to outperform their male counterparts—hoping this might change how others perceived their participation.

Some of the sport participants were motivated to challenge themselves and utilized sport as a means to do so. They were motivated to overcome fears in their lives and learn new skills and gain knowledge. Their success at challenging themselves made them eager to learn other sports, new languages, or other leisure activities (e.g., painting) that heretofore they had been afraid of trying.

### ***Perceived Competence***

Perceived competence in this study refers to the perception a person has about her own ability and mastery to achieve control over herself and her life. This component includes feeling confidence, independence, uniqueness, and extraversion. Most of the participants indicated that they felt a sense of achievement and confidence in the current sport or in other life domains, for example, in developing new skills or knowledge and achieving goals. By successfully learning new skills and teaching a sport to friends, they found themselves to be more confident. Their sense of confidence also received a boost from others' recognition. One basketball player (YS) said that getting recognized by co-players, particularly male players, and being invited to play against them significantly enhanced her confidence. However, it is noted that feeling confident resulted only when participants were adept at sports or physical activities.

Because of various conflicts in life and the social stigma attached to certain types of sports, the feeling of achievement and independence was based on achieving what a participant wanted. For example, a soccer player who was a homemaker and mother of two (ES) felt independent and in control because soccer provided a positive distraction from her housework. Furthermore, those who participated in traditionally masculine



sports in Korea felt unique because it was so rare for females to play those unconventional sports. Many women participated in feminine or weight-losing activities (e.g., yoga, jogging), but these participants (the ones who played traditionally masculine sports) had set themselves apart. Having done what other women would not, they felt capable of doing other things as well.

### **Interactional Component**

The interaction component of Psychological Empowerment refers to “the understanding people have about their community and related sociopolitical issues” and include critical awareness of environment, understanding causal agents, skill development, skill transfer across life domains, and resource mobilization (Zimmerman, 1995). The interview data in this study revealed the empowering outcomes and experiences relevant to each sub-component.

#### ***Critical Awareness***

According to Zimmerman (1995) to effectively interact in settings important to oneself, one must develop a critical awareness of one’s socio-political environment, including an understanding of causal agents. In this study, the participants acknowledged the possibility and variety of life, a lack of interest in themselves by social interaction, and people’s inferior perception of women. First, meeting with people of various backgrounds and lifestyles and garnering support from instructors provided two participants an eye-opening moment. They were forced to acknowledge that they had been caring only about other people and going through life with neither an interest in nor a focus on their own lives. More importantly, the players of traditionally masculine

sports recognized, through the negative reactions of other people including other female players, that women were perceived as physically inferior to men.

### ***Skill Development***

The interactional component of empowerment includes developing appropriate skills to influence or improve their lives such as decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership skills (Zimmerman, 1995). According to the interview data, the participants developed social skills, organizational skills, time management, leadership, followership, and physical and mental endurance through certain experiences in sport. Those who participated in team sports (i.e., baseball, basketball, soccer) pointed out that they learned how to communicate and how to resolve conflicts in sports, which contributed to their social skills. They learned how to resolve conflicts among their teammates. Moreover, they learned leadership and followership from experiencing various roles in their teams or teaching sports to teammates or friends. For example, a leader on a basketball team (YS) reported that she had learned how to behave as a leader and as follower. Most who participated in either individual or team sports said they had improved their time management owing to schedule conflicts with their work, housework, or personal lives.

### ***Skill Transfer Across Life Domains***

According to Zimmerman, one needs to be able to transfer the developed skills to other life domains. Responses from participants revealed that some skills obtained in sport affected and were transferred to other life domains. Such skills include social skills, anger management, time management, and leadership. Particularly, those who learned social skills in team sports saw it contributing to their social and career lives. It was easy

for them to initiate conversations with strangers or co-workers and pick up conversation topics about sport. More importantly, they learned how to behave as a newcomer at work or other organizations. Knowing how to behave is very important particularly in Korean culture; such knowledge facilitates Koreans' relationships with other members in an organization. As a newcomer, a Korean is expected to be respectful and obedient as well as quick-witted to the more seasoned members. The participants claimed that they had acquired such qualities through their team sport experiences.

### ***Resource Mobilization***

The ability to mobilize resources is also an essential aspect of the interactional component (Zimmerman, 1995). For some participants, resources that were obtained in a sport context were mobilized in other life domains, mainly at work. The basketball and soccer players (YS, ES) utilized the network built in sport and shared their resources with the teammates when she needed such things as ordering uniforms at work. Furthermore, those who played sports with co-workers were able to build good relationships and shared a common interest in the sport. The participation with co-workers facilitated cooperation at work, particularly with male co-workers.

### **Behavioral Component**

The behavioral component of Psychological Empowerment in this study refers to actions that the female participants took to control their lives and influence their surroundings. Although this component has a direct influence on outcomes of empowerment, the categories in the behavioral component were found the least frequently in the data.

### ***Taking Action for Self***

The behavioral component refers to actions taken to directly influence outcomes. Zimmerman illustrated the examples with seeking employment, living independently, and behaviors to manage stress or adapt to change. In the data, some of the participants took action to exercise control over themselves and their lives. Those who worked at male-dominated jobs (e.g., computer engineering company, sport center), but who also participated in a traditionally masculine sport indicated that they were more likely to assert their opinions and ideas than other female co-workers. A basketball player (YS) implied that she gained the ability by interact with and outplay male players. These participants had also overcome unfair treatment and persisted in the sports despite other people's judgments or unfair treatment. They were able to do so thanks to having met similar female players and having shared their experiences.

Both individual and group participants proactively managed work, housework, or personal life. Such elements created numerous conflicts of time and priorities. Just to keep participating in the sport, they had to become productive and effective in other areas of their lives.

### ***Involvement in Organizations***

Empowerment behaviors also include involvement and participation in organizations to exert control over their lives and surroundings (Zimmerman, 1995). Two of the participants (EK, JW) who participated in team sports were also involved in organizations that influenced their communities. Both of them participated in student government or a student organization where they took up positions of leadership. They

said they were able to do so based on their experiences of various roles on the sport team or club.

## **DISEMPOWERING OUTCOMES**

Despite of the empowering outcomes, the disempowering outcomes were identified in the interview as well. The disempowering outcomes were included in the table and organized by the Zimmerman's components in the table.

### **Intrapersonal Component**

While most of the participants gained feelings of control, support, and confidence, there were others whose confidence declined or who felt isolated and excluded from sport. Certain sports are simply dominated by males, offering a dearth of female players to play with, making some participants of basketball and baseball feel as though they did not belong in those sports. The participants (e.g., GW, MY) felt the sport field was too public and loathed the unsought attention of others. In fact, such attention caused their confidence in sport and self to falter. Furthermore, by having to deal with conflicts with other teammates, they grew more passive about meeting new people or initiating new relationships.

### **Interactional Component**

Some of those who participated in competitive sports (i.e., basketball, baseball, soccer) appeared to become aggressive and hostile when they consistently lost games or their opponents played unfairly. Sometimes, past injuries or memories of being watching thwarted them from learning new sports or skills. The financial pressure forced one

participant to reluctantly give up golf (MH). She claimed to have learned, for the first time in her life, how to abandon a goal.

### **Behavioral Component**

Although the participants desired to change the negativity they saw in their lives, many of them took no action to change it. Those participants tended to be involved in sport at lower skill levels and for shorter periods of time than those who took action. Those who encountered prejudice or perceptions that women were inferior often chose to ignore such encounters. When the participants came face to face with conservative viewpoints, they refused to speak up for themselves or other female players. Furthermore, because their significant others consistently reacted negatively and refused to accept their participating in their favorite sports, the participants were reluctant to share with such people their sport experiences.

### **CONCLUSION**

Nearly all the components and elements of the framework were indicated in the results and included in the Table. The intrapersonal components—how people think about themselves—were found most frequently in the interview data. There seemed to be stronger effects on the participants' perceptions of themselves than on their understanding of issues surrounding them or on behavioral changes.

According to the interview data, both empowering and disempowering outcomes were identified, though the majority of participants experienced empowering outcomes.

They had a hard time recalling the negative experiences and effects unless the impact on their lives was very high.

Furthermore, the results revealed that some of the empowerments were limited to the sport context and others infiltrated other life domains. One result that appeared to fail at such infiltration was the resistance to a perceived prejudice against females participating in male-dominated sports. For example, a basketball player (YS) who opposed such prejudice avoided confronting a male co-workers' unfair treatment to her at work (refer the quote in Table 2). Some outcomes and life skills that were gained from participating in sports and transferred to other life domains included anger management, empathy and social support, focus on self, desire to change negativity in life, desire to challenge, social and communication skills, and involvement in organizations. The participants were able to utilize those skills and outcomes in their personal lives or at work, school and home.

Table 2: Summary and Example of Empowering Outcomes, Sport Outcomes, and Sport Elements

Psychological Empowerment	Empowering Outcome	Sport Outcome	Element of Sport Experiences	Example Quotation
<b>Intrapersonal Component</b>				
Domain specific perceived control	Anger management	<p>Outlet to relieve aggression, anger and cynicism</p> <p>Changing her body shape and losing weight</p> <p>Change of perspective</p>	<p>Focus on instruction &amp; body Relaxation</p> <p>Ancillary services (aroma, massage)</p> <p>Adequate amount of physical fatigue</p> <p>Conversations with an instructor (complaining about work)</p>	<p>By the time I finish my yoga class, I sweat a lot and feel refreshed. Then I don't think about the person any more whom I was angry with at work. (JE)</p> <p>I used to lose my temper all the time. Because of yoga and... I can keep my composure now because my body has changed. I think I became relaxed and calm now. (HW)</p> <p>[My yoga instructor] sprayed something that smelled good. Maybe it sounds unreal but I felt comfortable... My co-worker said my negative attitude changed a little bit. Something inside myself was relieved and relaxed, and I became comfortable and found peace of mind. (YJ)</p>
	Feeling empathy & social support	<p>Recognized &amp; included</p> <p>Feeling okay to play masculine sport</p>	<p>Instructor's consolation for daily struggles</p> <p>Participation with similar others</p>	<p>Among the things that the instructor said... "There must have been a lot of things that bothered you and made difficult for you today, so you should reward yourself for your efforts you made today and you deserve it." When I heard that, I felt my heart drop. She must have said so because that's what everybody's going through every day. It's not just me struggling. Thinking that way helped me embrace my days way better. (YJ)</p> <p>Because no uncomfortable gaze is inside our club, we can play well together. Although you feel weak alone, it is okay to play this sport if I'm together with other [female] players. Therefore, I didn't feel uncomfortable and was easier. (YS)</p>



Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Personal attention & control	Focus on her body & self Feeling alive	Focus on body movement & trainers' instruction Encouraging comments from instructors Meditations in yoga Doing what she wants	The instructor said many times to focus on your bodies and think about yourselves. Those comments impacted me greatly even though I could just ignore it. Then I thought 'How many times have I concentrated on myself in my life?' The time I exercise is when I focus entirely on myself. (JE)  I think I have the ability to manage myself and care about myself because of the effect of exercise. (HW)  [I] Tried to concentrate on what the trainer said... I felt my mind purified while I concentrated on the instructor's comments, "Focus on which part of your arm, use that certain muscle." (JH)
	Control over children	Development of intimacy with children	Spending quality time with children	I go outside to ride a bicycle with my daughter. She likes being active, too, and because she gets to spend time together with mom, she takes better care of her little sister and is more obedient afterwards, thinking my mom cares about me. (MY)
Motivation to control	Desire to change negativity in life	Exposure to various people who celebrate their lives Change of perspective	Participation with people in various background Weight loss	Now it is not that the world sees you differently but that you see the world differently. You would change how you view the world. When you do physical activities and achieve it for yourself... I felt it... people around the world look at you in a different way and consider you as precious. (HW)  I'm not totally optimistic but cynical for everything, but suddenly the world is bright and positive... this is contradictory but now I'm willing to try to become optimistic. (YJ)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Desire to control herself & body	Positive change from self-control		I realized that I changed positively just as much as I take care about myself. I keenly realized that I shouldn't neglect controlling myself. As I have felt it, I'm willing to take care of myself. (HW)
	Desire to challenge - overcome fear and learn new sports or knowledge (i.e., new languages, painting, sport)	Successful to challenge themselves and learn new sport	Learning new skills in sports	<p>I'm eager to try different things and as I started the sport, I think it motivated me to challenge my ability for other areas. I became confident about things I couldn't try because I was afraid. Now that I succeeded once, I can do it... I'm not a good painter so want to learn painting... (JE)</p> <p>I didn't know anybody or anything about this club but I came here and started this sport. Because of that experience, I wasn't afraid of trying anything else and tried to experience everything. (JW)</p> <p>I become confident that I could be interested in something and do it, so like to challenge myself instead of just being curious about it. (HW)</p>
	Desire to overcome the perception of women as inferior to men	<p>Recognition of the perception on females in masculine sports</p> <p>Negative feedback from friends, family, co-worker</p> <p>Experience of rejection from certain types of people (masculine sports)</p>	Ignorance and prejudice on women's participation in masculine sports (by both women and men)	<p>Women are considered very bad. First, women's physical condition is not as good as men's. Recently they show the women's national competition on TV and even we, as female players, think the games are full of foolish errors. When I hear 'Ugh, why do you even have the woman's league?' I feel like I will do better and kick their butt. (JY)</p> <p>I wished people thought more favorably about women who play basketball so I wanted to do more external activities. I think that's why I played harder... I wanted to show them 'we can be just as good as you can.' (YS)</p>

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Willing to be a leader or an organizer		Organizing sport tournaments Experience of various roles in a team	I became involved in more activities and wanted to organize something... some events. I enthusiastically told them, "I want to do! I wanted to do!" If possible, I would do it. (EK)
Perceived competence	Feeling of self-confidence and achievement - current sports - learning new skills - achieving goals in life	Achieving what she wants & plans Weight loss Positive feedback from others about participation Change in others' perception of self as an active person	Learning new skills in sports Invitation by male players Teaching sports to friends Recognized & included by peers	Every morning I do physical activity and feel proud of myself that I did something for myself... The little feeling that comes from achievement... when you learn the freestyle in swimming. That feeling of achievement gives me energy. (JE)  I played more important positions as time went by. Every game I felt I performed better than before. As I felt I had the ability to play all the positions, I felt confident in the sport. (JW)  Because my body has changed... that moment was really impactful. I gained the feeling of achievement and confidence... I think I am able to control my body now. (HW)  As far as other people think, I received comments that I'm not passive any more. The fact that I participate in physical activities gave others a strong impression of me as an active person. This change of perception on me definitely affected me in a positive way. (JH)
	Feeling of independence	Achieving what she wants Diverting her attention from home	Doing what she wants	For instance, I don't nag my husband or whine any more... I get to play soccer so I'm not concerned or ask what he does. Each of us has our own separate territories now. (ES)  When I started baseball, I felt a kind of sense of freedom. I relieved my stress and did what I liked to do as a hobby. So it was good influence. (JW)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Feeling unique and special	<p>Specialty in a sport</p> <p>Recognition of many women participating in feminine or weight-losing activities (e.g., yoga, weight training)</p> <p>Rarity of female participants in traditionally masculine sports (i.e., baseball, basketball)</p>	Playing sports unconventional for females	<p>First, it's an opportunity to be differentiated from others. I wrote about this on my resume, so I was asked about it at the interview for an internship. Then I started talking about it with enthusiasm. Because I had real experience, special experience, I could talk about it vividly... People in my country see me very interesting for the fact that I play baseball as a woman. (JY)</p> <p>I say that I play baseball, not any other sport, that usually guys play and so people think I'm unique. Guys really like it. They found it very unusual and interesting that I could play a sport uncommon for women. (JY)</p>
	Extroversion		Social interaction with teammates	<p>I can start a conversation with strangers. I say 'hi' even to foreigners and play basketball with them.... That way I've changed a lot. It's easier to approach people and talk now. (YS)</p> <p>I used to be very shy so my mom worried a lot about me. So my mom sent me to Taekwondo school for it. As I went out and played basketball, I think I became outgoing... for dealing with people. I became very bright and outgoing and think it has been helpful for social and career life a lot. (YS)</p> <p>In my case, I tended to like only people I like and didn't have a big circle of friends. But interpersonal relationships skills and tolerance with people grew. I still tend to meet people I like, though. But I'm not closed or unfriendly to others. (ES)</p>

Table 2, cont.

	Empowering Outcome	Sport Outcome	Element of Sport Experiences	Example Quotation
<b>Interactional Component</b>				
Critical awareness	Acknowledge the variety of lifestyles	Exposure to various people who enjoy/celebrate their lives	Meeting people from various backgrounds	The people I meet became more various. I used to meet a very limited number of people everyday, but now I meet new people without any conditions. There are people living like these... laughing, enjoying their lives, and complimenting me for random things. People can live like this... a lot of people enjoy their lives but how come I didn't know that? This kind of lifestyle should be fun. (YJ)
	Acknowledge inferior perception of women		Others' negative reaction to herself and female players	<p>Women are considered very bad. First, women's physical condition is not as good as men's. Recently they show the women's national competition on TV and even we, as female players, think the games are full of foolish errors. (JY)</p> <p>When I have baseball gears with me in public transportation, I feel people staring at me, 'what kind of a girl she is?' At first I hated that gaze and got pissed off but now I got used to it. So I don't care other people any more. I also stop telling my friends that I play baseball because I think they will judge me with bias. I think I won't get positive reactions like 'Why does she play baseball?' I don't want to hear 'Why do girls play it?' (JW)</p>

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Recognition of lack of interest in self		Encourage & support from instructors and female friends	<p>I was talking to my instructor, and was shocked when she said, 'Trust yourself.' I've been living without knowing that I didn't trust myself. I just didn't trust. Like I said, I've changed 95% by now. I hadn't been paying attention to myself, wasn't interested in myself but was interested just in how people see me. (HW)</p> <p>The instructor said many times to focus on your bodies and think about yourselves. Those comments impacted me greatly even though I could've just ignored it. Then I thought 'How many times have I concentrated on myself in my life?' The time I do physical activities is when I focus entirely on myself. (JE)</p>
Skill development	Development of social skills - communication skills - resolution of conflicts (yield & understand others' position)	Fellowship development with teammates Attempt to solve conflicts	Social interaction with teammates & program mates Conflicts among teammates	<p>Men consider women as inferior in social skill... maybe it's a bias. At work I'm told I have good social skills. But usually, even if women were good at their job, [men] still wouldn't say it. I think it's because of lack of communication... lack of fellowship with co-workers. If you participate in sport, whether it's with men or women, it's very helpful as you have to play various roles and interact with others... (YS)</p> <p>Because I play with various people, when we don't get along, I had a hard time forming relationships with people. But we need to see each other so try to yield and try to change... As I run into various people 3-4 times a week, I am more capable of being generous. (ES)</p>

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Acquisition of organization skills		Event organizing experiences	I think organizing events helped me improve my ability. I learned how to encourage and work with other people to organize games. (EK)
	Development of time management skills		Schedule conflict among PA and work/housework	As an employee, I have little time to do sports. So I became organized in terms of time. I used to participate whenever I wanted, but now I need to manage my schedule to play more and more. (YS)
	Development of leadership and followership		Experience of various roles Leading and teaching sports to friends	One of the reasons that team sport can be difficult is that a team needs a leader and followers, but if things get agitated, it becomes hard. So the first thing you need to do is to set up a leader and followers but I think it's difficult to maintain that frame. As a leader you need patience and followers, as a leader can't do it alone, the leader needs to be patient. (YS)
	Development of physical and mental endurance - endure physical hardship - endure challenges		Consistent defeat in games Enduring bad condition during team sports	I developed my patience. We lost a lot of games. Once we played in the heat of August and no balls were coming to me. Although I really want to quit this game, I couldn't. As I learned to be more patient in baseball, I try to be more and more patient. I endured at that time, so now I can do the same. (JY) I told you I learned endurance. Two years ago I went to the national competition but we didn't have substitutes. We still had 30 minutes but I got a cramp in my leg. But as we didn't have substitutes, I wanted to get replaced but we couldn't. I drove a long way to be there so couldn't quit. I endured it. (JW)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
Skill transfer across life domains	Social skills transfer to workplace		Initiating communications Conversation topics of sport/PA Learning how to behave as a newbie at work or other organizations	Because people of various ages were in my team, I learned how to interact with people and what not to do... in a good way. I learned it from the team on the field before I learned it at work. I learned how to interact with the elders or what to do as a junior in a group so I knew what to do as junior employee at work. (JY)  I like socializing with people at the gym. I like socializing at other places, too. I say 'hi' to other people first. I was weight training by myself, but I talked to other people in the gym. "How long have you been working out?" "It is better not to do this but to do that." If you approach them, they don't ignore you. It's been an opportunity to make friends. (EK)
	Development of intimacy with family	Sharing common interest in sports	Spending quality time with her spouse, children, and other family members during participation	I think I got closer to my mother-in-law as we talked about swimming. I have a common interest with her and a subject of conversation. "Breast stroke is so difficult" or "I can't do butterfly." Then she goes, "I can't do butterfly at all." It helped me break the ice with her and we don't have awkward silences any more. (JE)  I can have a conversation with my son now. He started realizing that his mom knows something about sports so he can talk about what's going on in his life. (ES)
Resource mobilization	Sharing resources when needed	Network with teammates		I'm trying to meet more people from various backgrounds through basketball now. Recently I could connect with a uniform company or basketball association so I have good relationships with them. Then I can use their resources or vice versa... from networking (YS)



Table 2, cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Facilitation of cooperation with co-workers, esp. with male co-workers	Common interest in sports Ability to converse about sports	Opportunity to play and socialize with co-workers	Although they are in different departments, I sometimes need help with their area while working. At those times if you know their faces, it's easy to talk to them and natural to start conversation about the table tennis tournament. We talked during and after the tournament, so when I went to ask their help with work, I said I saw you playing at the tournament. (JH)
<b>Behavioral Component</b>				
Taking action for herself	Proactively managing work & personal life Productive at work & home		Conflict of schedule and priority among PA, work, and personal life	<p>I became effective because I need to study, work, and play sports too. Let's say there is a task that usually takes 8 days but I finish it in 5 because I've got to go to play baseball on Sunday. And then I'm off to play baseball. (MJ)</p> <p>I want to go to the [yoga] class so I talk to my boss about scheduling me to work overtime only once or twice a week. It's more effective. (YJ)</p> <p>You'd think it would be more tiring, but I hurry to go home and finish housework faster and neater to come out and play soccer again. It gives me energy to move faster. (ES)</p>
	Challenge of learning new skills & gaining knowledge (studying and obtaining licenses, yoga instructor certificates)	Gaining confidence	<p>Successful in new challenges of sport</p> <p>Achievement of weight loss</p>	<p>I set up a plan a while ago that I was going to be good at English before 30s. When I run into a foreigner, I want to be able to talk without a fear... There are many things I planned but put it off. I'm trying to start one by one. I actually started learning English... and other things. (JE)</p> <p>Simply speaking, it's confidence. Currently it became a challenge for myself... that I started my career again. (HW)</p>

Table 2. cont.

	<b>Empowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
	Ability to assert her idea/opinion at work		Outplaying male players (my interpretation?) Interaction with others	I have started to talk a lot and assert my point of view. I didn't used to be assertive but have become talkative and assertive now. I thought I wasn't assertive at work at all, but they said that my character is strong. I say what I like to say, like 'I don't think that is right...' Maybe it is because I played with guys? (YS)
	Overcome/speak out against unfair treatment (resistance) as women (in sport)		Meeting female colleagues to share oppressing experiences Support of instructors	I think you need to meet right people for colleagues. When you receive the public gaze, especially from men, you need to meet people like you. Fortunately I started attending in this women's club. I became to think 'there are a lot of people like me.' so I was able to overcome the uncomfortable gaze. (YS)
	Influence children (different category?) - encourage and support children to participate in sports	Experience of positive change in characteristics  Acknowledge of positive sport experience		My son used to be very shy but I tagged him along with me to the soccer fields. I tried to take him and let him work off excess energy through sports because I had those experiences. Then this shy boy became outgoing. If I didn't like any sport or play any, I don't think I would have encouraged him to do so. As I have experienced it, which was really good, I have tried to help him play sports so that I am raising him to be more outgoing. (ES)
Involvement in Org	Taking a leader position in school/at work Participation in a student government		Experience as a leader in a sport club or team	Because I liked playing sports, I led my team and then the student government and other organizations. I was a vice president, too... I've changed a lot... and I liked to be involved in the student government. I guess I learned a lot about leadership overall. (JW)  In the [basketball] club I was a vice president... I had to be in charge of everything. They asked me to and I took the lead although I was under a lot of stress. (EK)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Disempowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
Intrapersonal Component	Feeling of isolation & exclusion	Inability to enjoy sport as much as she wanted  Too public space	Male-dominated sport – no girls to play it with	At the beginning, as all I had were girlfriends around me, none of my friends played sport. Particularly when I was in elementary school, middle school, and even high school, none of girls around me played sport so I had to hang out only with boys.... It was embarrassing and I thought they were annoyed with me at first because a girl couldn't come close to a boy's level no matter how well she can play. (YS)
	Low confidence in self	Low confidence (shyness) in body & PA  Comparison of her with more athletic mates	Too public space  Getting public attentions	Because I thought I was chubby and fat, I wanted to play [sport] well when others paid attention to me but couldn't. I wasn't confident, either. In contrast, my brother played well and I needed to do it with him, the person who is relatively way better than me. I hated it (YJ)
	Low confidence in socializing	Passive in meeting new people and initiating new relationships	Conflict with other teammates	I used to always be confident about maintaining good relationships with people, but now that I realize that I can't do that with everybody, I'm really careful. While we ran the team, some of my friends quit over conflicts of opinions. We created the team together as we thought we could unite, but at the end we had a falling out and split into separate groups. I was disappointed and became skeptical about human relationships. (MJ)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Disempowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
Interactional Component	Development of aggression & hostility		Lack of fair play Consistent defeats of her team	I became hostile. As we kept on losing to a same team, I felt I would beat this team one day no matter what... Some teams play just dirty and rude. (JW)
	Comfortable with females but not males		Exclusively female participation (female-only programs)	[The female-only pool] is more comfortable and not fast paced there. If guys swim fast, I need to go as fast as they do. If I don't, I'm in their way... (JE)  Yoga clothes are really tight on your body. I would feel embarrassed with men in there. The positions, too, are... in case of yoga you got to twist your body and so on so it would be uncomfortable with men around me. (HE)
	Hesitant to learn new sports and skills		Injury  Memory of peers watching her playing sports  Lack of successful experience in physical activity	Definitely people who like playing sport seem bright and social, so it is easy for them to join clubs while I'm so afraid and hesitant. Because I don't have those experiences, my life has been limited (YJ)
	Learning abandonment of goal	Forced to quit, reluctantly, due to financial pressure	High cost of participation	When I played golf, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I might be unable to keep doing it. It was miserable, thinking maybe it wasn't for me. It was because of financial problems. I felt I needed to let it go. (SY2)

Table 2, cont.

	<b>Disempowering Outcome</b>	<b>Sport Outcome</b>	<b>Element of Sport Experiences</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
Behavioral Component	No actual change of negativity in life	Impact not big enough Hard to change one's characteristics	Low level of involvement & demand	Still I'm not really active or outgoing and it's hard to say my characteristics changed entirely. As I was slowly involved in physical activities, I felt a little more active but wasn't affected enough to change my personalities. Only to the extent that people just think of me as a little more active. No more than that. So I'm worried. (JH)
	Neglectful of work or family		Spending too much time in sport Obsessive about sport Too competitive	Sport addiction... I'm so obsessed with basketball. I have a job but need to play basketball, so I get so upset if I need to work on the weekend. I'm so pissed. When I work overtime, too, I have to neglect other things. (YS)  Sometimes when I go to a tournament, I neglect my family so I feel a little uncomfortable about that. It bothers me. (ES)
	Suppression of opinions - Ignoring or avoiding reaction to conservative people - Unwilling to share sport experiences with others (e.g., female friends, parents)	Prejudice of sport from friends, family, and co-workers  Negative reactions and rejection from friends, family, and co-worker (basketball, baseball)	Negative interactions within sport  Unconventional type of sport, conflict with femininity	I suggested changing something [in the team]... They said they would accept it but they didn't. Instead, they told us to leave the team. (JW)  If the elders say it, I would ignore them. I just said, "I'm going to quit." And my friends would ask me why, as a girl, I would want to play baseball...My girlfriends don't like [my playing baseball]. (JY)  Suppose my boss tells me to do something at work, something I'm not supposed to do, like fetching coffee or copying. I really don't want to do it so I get upset. But I can't say anything back because it won't help me. Particularly at work I can't say those things. I just do it. (YS)  I don't tell my friends that I play baseball. I feel they will judge me and have a bias against me. People know I like baseball but if they know I play, they'll annoy me... "why do you play?" (JW)

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study explored the mechanisms that foster women's empowerment in a sport setting and identified the empowering outcomes and elements of sport experiences that affected the outcomes. Zimmerman's Psychological Empowerment framework was useful for understanding and interpreting the experiences of the female sport participants in this study. The findings demonstrate that sport proved capable of empowering these women in various ways—such as stimulating their desire to take control over their lives, challenging themselves to learn new skills, developing life skills, and taking actions for themselves. Many of these results are also consistent with the literature on women's sport experiences (e.g., Blinde et al., 1994, 2001; Brace-Govan, 2004; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) and with the literature on sport for development (Weiss, 2008).

However, this study provided several salient points of departure from previous work, that provide additional insight into motivations for sport, the capacity of sport for empowerment, and the expression of empowerment in these women's lives. Earlier studies have provided the insight that sport has a capacity to promote psychological and life skill development, yet remained vague about *how* those women actually took actions to assert control over their lives and how their lives were specifically changed in and outside of sport. This study explored both the psychological and behavioral changes and sought the specific sport elements that affected such changes.

The first part of this chapter discusses two mechanisms of individual-level empowerment and how it transfers into their daily lives. Further, throughout the interview data several underpinning theoretical and conceptualizing issues (i.e., Psychological

Empowerment, feminisms, women's experiences in sport participation) emerged that deserve additional consideration and attention for future research. Therefore the second part of this chapter addresses those issues and discusses how they might be examined in future research. Finally, the study revealed several important practical implications. The third section of this chapter, therefore, addresses issues and suggestions to program organizers of sports or physical activities to provide more empowering experiences to participants.

## **FEELING EMPOWERED AND GAINING POWER**

### **Meaning of Empowerment**

It has long been taken for granted in many parts of the world that a woman's role and duty is to care for other people (Bracke, Christiaens, & Wauterickx; 2008; Hennessey, 2015). Particularly in Korea, the general perception is that a woman's primary role is to be a caregiver at home, school, and work (Kang, 2011; Renshaw, 2011). Their prior responsibility is expected to take care of the people around them, particularly their families including their extended family members (e.g., in-laws, too, if married). The women in this study had also taken it for granted to put their family ahead of themselves.

For Korean women such perception may be strong and affect them because of the philosophy of Confucianism historically embedded in Korean culture (Kang, 2011). Confucians argued that a virtuous woman should follow the lead of males in her family, specifically the father before her marriage and the husband after her marriage.

Furthermore, Koreans in general care about others' expectations and obligations. They often live for what they are expected to do or what they should do rather than what they want to do. While they grow up, they have a lot of pressure of parents' expectations. Korean parents have high expectation of their children's academic achievement and put pressure on their children even in the decision of career occupation. After they get married, Korean women are typically expected to think and care for their new family (i.e., husband and children) and in-laws prior to themselves. Therefore, Korean women, particularly those who are in or above the age range of the interviewees in this study, typically do not have many opportunities to think about what they really want throughout their lives. Even if they knew what they wanted, many could not pursue it particularly when it conflicts with what their family members want or need (Renshaw, 2011). In other words, they do not have much freedom to control their own lives. Rather, they always had a pressure from others in their lives and think of what they are expected to do and what they should do when they make a decision. Therefore, Korean women often have this worldview: to think about what their families want rather than what they want and to take care of their families and homes rather than to care for themselves.

Furthermore, the Confucianism philosophy has also been embedded in the culture of sport in South Korea, which consider women as inferior both mentally and physically. Therefore, most sports have been generally perceived as male and dominated by men in South Korea until two decades ago. Men still have more opportunities to participate in sport than women and women are still considered neglected in sport participation (Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2013). Due to the traditional culture,



many Koreans may take it granted that men have more resources and opportunities to participate in sports than women.

However, 70 percent of the Korean women interviewed mentioned that this worldview was changed through epiphanic experiences during participation of sports or physical activities. The women reported that they felt empowered through their sport experiences. The study shows that this change occurs through two mechanisms: 1) providing a safe place to be themselves, and 2) promoting challenges to learn new things and to overcome gender prejudice.

### **Empowering Process**

#### ***Safe Place to Be Themselves***

Participation in sports provided the participants a safe space to focus on self and to be different from traditional Korean women. The experiences of sport participation enlightened the women to attract their attention to self and focus on self rather than their family or others in their lives. At least during participation in sports, the women were able to forget about the gender expectations and responsibilities but focus on themselves and allowed to be different from other feminine women.

*Safe Place to Focus on Self.* Particularly the sports and physical activities in an individual setting offered such a “personal” or “self-focused” space. The women in this study focused on the movement of their own bodies during the participation, which led them to began to pay attention to self. In this study, unlike previous studies, the physical activities that are not typically associated with gaining physical strength or power affected the feeling of empowerment. The previous studies (Blinde et al., 2001; Brace-

Govan, 2004) mainly examined elite athletes and associated personal empowerment with physical strength. However, in this study those who participated in activities that are not about gaining physical strength or power; yoga participants for instance, gained a feeling of control as they came to focus on their own bodies and lives, rather than caring (about) the opinions of other people. Yoga is known to emphasize finding an inner self and enhancing body awareness and concentration on the balance of body and mind (Daubenmier, 2005; Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008). Because of this emphasis and intention, yoga enabled the female participants to recognize that they had cared not about themselves but about other people in their lives such as family, friends, or co-workers. According to these women, it was one kind of the empowering experiences.

Based on the intention of yoga, the role of the instructor was an important element that enlightened the participants. When instructors explicitly and implicitly encouraged them to focus on their bodies or inner self, the women began to think of themselves for the first time in a long while. This reaction is not surprising since it reinforces a feminist argument. According to feminists, a woman's concentration on her body and self can enhance her control over her life and reduce self-objectification (Daubenmier, 2005). Therefore, the sport organizers who desire to use a sport program to convey these qualities need to consider how to embrace the emphasis of self in their program.

*Place Allowed them to be Different.* A safe environment for sport, in this study, allowed the female participants the ability to be themselves, be different from traditional Korean women, and be protected from gender expectations. As shown in previous studies conducted in western contexts (e.g., Brace-Govan, 2004; Green, 2001; Theberge, 2000)

women who participated in typically masculine sports (i.e., weight lifting, football, and ice hockey in previous studies) were considered contrary to gender prescription and were expected to be masculine by society. While the women felt different from feminine women outside of the sport fields, they felt okay and normal while playing those sports with other female players. In this study, the sports considered typically masculine and male-dominated were baseball, basketball, and soccer, which were all female-only team sports. In case of soccer, while the sport is typically considered appropriate for both males and females in North American countries, it is a highly male-dominated sport that primarily only males play in South Korea. For women, because those masculine sports were female-only team sports, the experiences of playing these masculine sports with other similar women and sharing both their unique and oppressive experiences with their female teammates made these women feel normal and free from gender bias and expectations of society.

### ***Promoting Challenges***

In addition to providing a safe place for self-awareness, sport participation can be a place to generate challenges. The results of this study revealed several ways of challenge: challenging themselves to learn new skills and knowledge, to change negative attitudes in life, and to overcome the dichotomy of gender stereotype and expectation.

*Promoting Challenges to Learn New Skills.* The process of successfully gaining new sport skills generated confidence and motivation to attempt to learn new skills in other life domains – for example, learning other languages, time management skills, and painting. The women who desired to challenge themselves actually took actions to learn

these additional new skills and one woman even started her career again. The women who had been only thinking about doing something new for a while actually took steps to accomplish it. These women viewed the challenge to learn as a possibility rather than an obstacle (Blinde et al., 2001).

*Promoting Challenges to Overcome Gender Prejudice.* In order to challenge gender prejudice, women need to be aware of the presence of such prejudice. According to the results of this study, the awareness and recognition occurred through negative experiences from participation in male-dominated sports (i.e., baseball, basketball, soccer). The women who participated in these sports experienced negative feedback, strong resistance, and rejection from friends, family, co-workers, and male participants.

These negative experiences generated a positive result—the awareness of gender bias and expectation. Ironically, it was the positive experience from participation that enabled the women to take the actions of challenging the gender bias. The female participants who experienced positive interactions (i.e., outplaying male players, sharing their oppressive experiences with their teammates) developed assertiveness and overcame unfair gendered treatments regarding their participation. The negative experiences produced awareness whereas the positive experiences generated actions.

Then, although the negative interactions and experiences helped the women become aware of gender prejudice, one may wonder, “are the negative experiences a necessary prerequisite to empower the women to challenge those distorted perceptions of themselves?” Despite the empowering outcome, those negative experiences were hurtful

and were remembered as terrible experiences for those women. Some women dropped out and never experienced the positive outcomes (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998).

In summary, through these two different mechanisms – 1) providing a safe place to be themselves and 2) promoting challenges to learn new skills and to overcome gender prejudice – the women in this study felt empowered through their participation. For most women in this study, empowerment in sports was transferred into their daily lives. How and to what extent these empowerments were applied and transferred beyond the sport experience is discussed next.

### **Extensions of Empowerment into Daily Life**

One of the most interesting findings in this study is that certain types of empowerment appeared to be transferred into other life domains (e.g., home, work, school) while others remained within the sport domain. The results showed that the sub-components of empowerment such as taking control over self and challenging oneself in a sport realm influenced their attitudes or behaviors at home or work. However, these transfers or changes were not consistent among the participants. The results suggest that the empowering outcomes that manifest themselves in life domains other than the sport realm depend on the social settings of sport (i.e., individual, social, or team sport), gender-related characteristics of sport (i.e., masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral), and the level of involvement in the activities.

First, the social settings of sport mattered to the specific domains of empowerment. The individual sports and physical activities affected the participants' change of perceptions, attitudes and behaviors regarding themselves. Those who

participated in individual activities such as yoga or swimming became more attentive to self, more effectively managed anger at home or work, or took actions to proactively manage and organize their lives. In contrast, participating in sports in social setting (i.e., team sports, social dance) enabled the participants to feel empathy and social support and develop social skills within the activities so that they became actively engaged in various (school or work) organizations outside of sport.

Second, participating in traditionally masculine sports (i.e., baseball, basketball, soccer) often enabled the female participants to recognize gendered biases and practices in the sport realm. Similar to Green's study (2001), female participants in the current study were aware of the strong affiliation of the sport with masculinity and felt supported by each other. The women in both Green's and this study shared their experiences in the field, including experiences that are not readily accepted in other contexts. However, unlike the women in this study, the flag football players in Green's study enjoyed and even celebrated their identity as players of masculine sport by interacting with other female players in social activities and events. The players in this study did not seem to typically enjoy or celebrate their identity but often hid their identity as masculine sport players. However, because they shared unique experiences as female players of those sports, they felt supported and bonded with other female players as was also observed in the study of Blinde and her colleagues (1994). Because of the social support and feeling of empathy, the players became able to speak up and overcome the unfair gendered treatment in and out of sports and assert their ideas at work.

Among those who have participated in the masculine sports, critical awareness and resistance against gendered oppression were transferred to some of the women but not all. While most of the female players in this study were aware of gendered bias and practices toward women, only some of them took actions to resist or change the bias. Furthermore, resistant actions rarely took place in other life domains or did not lead to a collective action, consistent with the results of Blinde et al. (1994). Generally, although these women thought that the gendered bias and social perception of female athletes needed to be changed, they remained passive, taking no action to make a change. They wanted to wait until the social perception naturally changed on its own, not believing they could effect a change regarding the matter. The factors that influenced whether or not this particular transfer occurred could be due to the characteristics of the individuals, the strength of negative reactions from others, and the strength of family and social pressure.

Third, how the empowerment was transferred to daily life depended on the involvement level of the participants. Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998) found that while some women's lack of involvement and passivity conforms to traditional gender roles, actively participating women were aware of the gendered circumstances. Moreover, those active women were empowered by developing their own identity during the sport activity and differentiating themselves from the traditionally feminine participants. In this study the women who were highly involved in masculine sports became more aware of gender bias in the sport and this awareness continued beyond the sporting environment. Furthermore, the women with low involvement felt limited in their ability to change the

negativities in their lives although they desired to change. Therefore, according to this study and previous studies, empowerment transfer can vary depending on the level of involvement.

Interestingly in this study, the length of involvement in sports did not seem to have a definite influence to the strength of empowerment or the extension to daily life. Those who participated in individual setting sports for a comparatively short time (1-2 years) changed or did not change their behaviors. For example, a woman who participated in yoga and table tennis for about 2 years confessed that she had not actually taken any actions to reduce negative attitude or behavior in her life although she desired to do so. Other women who participated in yoga or weight training for about 1.5-2 years changed their behaviors and changed negativities in their lives. The major distinctiveness between the sport experiences of these two groups of women was the level of involvement in sports, rather than its time. Therefore, the level of involvement appeared to have more influence on empowering outcomes in daily life than the length of involvement.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT THEORY AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS**

Previous studies of women's empowerment through sport participation explored intrapersonal component but did not discuss behavioral changes. Blinde et al. (1993) found intrapersonal and behavioral changes, but only in elite athletes. Zimmerman provided more complete explanations for empowerment by including intrapersonal, interactional and behavioral components of empowerment. Feminist scholars (e.g., Carr,



2003; Stromquist, 2002) argued that critical awareness is required to create changes for collective action. This study examined the effect of sport participation on interactional and behavioral components of empowerment. This study also explored the effect of socialization pressure on empowerment of women in Korean culture. The findings of this study illustrated a need to expand Zimmerman's construct for non-elite athletes. The results imply that while critical awareness may be necessary for collective action, collective action is not always the only outcome of empowerment. This study showed in fact, that critical awareness of gender prejudice is not required for an individual to feel empowered enough to make subtle behavioral changes in their own lives, a phenomenon I have labeled *self empowerment*. The findings of this study support Zimmerman's and feminists' interactional and behavioral components of Psychological Empowerment for the mechanism of challenging social perception, which I labeled as *action empowerment* (see Table 3).

### **Self Empowerment**

These two types of empowerment, self empowerment and action empowerment, categorically describe the results of this study. The first type of empowerment, self empowerment, embodies the psychological aspects of empowerment – perceived attention and control of self and recognition of lack of attention to self, and includes subtle personal behavioral changes (Figure 2). Mainly the experiences of individual setting sports (i.e., yoga, swimming, weight training) facilitated the participants to gain this empowerment. Furthermore, this self empowerment rendered beneficial psychological outcomes such as a perceived attention and control of self, a positive and

Table 3: Self Empowerment and Action Empowerment

	<b>Self (Feeling) Empowerment</b>	<b>Action (Doing) Empowerment</b>
Zimmerman's Components	Intrapersonal component	Interactional and behavioral components
Experiences	Individual setting sports	Masculine, team sports
Process	Focus on self → Subtle, personal change Individual-level empowerment	Critical awareness → resisting or collective actions → change of social perception Individual-level empowerment but toward community level
Outcomes	Psychological outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived attention &amp; control of self</li> <li>• Recognition of lack of attention to self</li> <li>• Positive/optimistic attitude of life</li> <li>• Desire to change negativities</li> </ul> Behavioral outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive life &amp; time management</li> </ul>	Psychological outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical awareness of social perception of female sport participants</li> <li>• Critical awareness of the cause – gender prejudice</li> <li>• Desire to overcome and resist the gender prejudice</li> </ul> Behavioral outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome, resist and raise voice against gender perception</li> <li>• Attempt to change the social perception</li> </ul>
Effect on Sport	Mostly positive experiences → Lead to retention of sport participation	Resulted from negative experiences (rejection, ignorance) → Possible drop out
Weakness	No actions to change the cause Fundamental but insufficient	Backlash from both women and men (because of radicalness) Empowerment achieved only from negative experiences – hurtful and unethical to provide

optimistic attitude of life, and a desire to change their negativities in life. Surprisingly and contrary to Zimmerman's interactional component, these subtle personal changes did not depend upon a critical awareness of *why* they had not paid enough attention to themselves. Zimmerman argued that the critical awareness of causal agent and action to change the causal agent generated empowerment for the individual to positively impact her community. However, the self empowerment observed in this study stimulated behavioral changes in the individual for improving the quality of her life rather than the community. Even though the female participants took no actions to change the causal agent of their lack of attention to self, they felt empowered to make subtle, personal changes in their lives such as proactive life management and challenging themselves to learn new skills.

### **Action Empowerment**

The second type of empowerment, action empowerment, involves the individual taking actions to change her environment: resisting negative reactions from others,

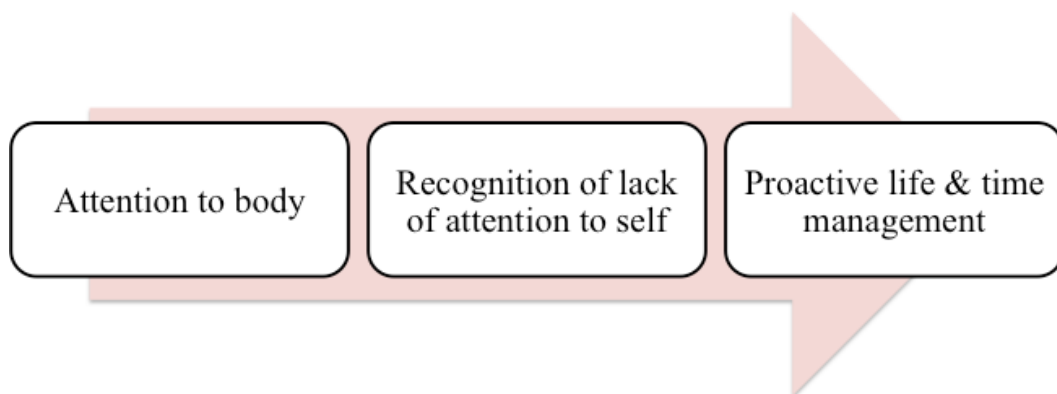


Figure 2: Process of Self Empowerment

challenging gender prejudice, and changing social perceptions. This change is enabled when the individual becomes critically aware of a causal agent (e.g., why they got the negative reactions from other people), which leads to resisting actions that change social perceptions of women. Participating in masculine sports created rejection experiences that eventually led to recognizing the inferior perception of women in and out of sport, desiring to overcome the perception, and actually overcoming unfair gendered treatment toward these women (Figure 3). This awareness and change are reflected in Zimmerman's and feminist scholars' research as interactional and behavioral components of empowerment. Zimmerman and feminist scholars emphasized the importance of the interactional component—"the understanding people have about their community and related sociopolitical issues (Zimmerman, 1995, p.589)" to affect the change in community. The interactional component includes an understanding of the norms and values of a particular context, which in the case of this study means gender norms and prejudices, and an understanding of causal agents of the issue. Gaining critical awareness was considered particularly important as it can be gained only by unique experiences,

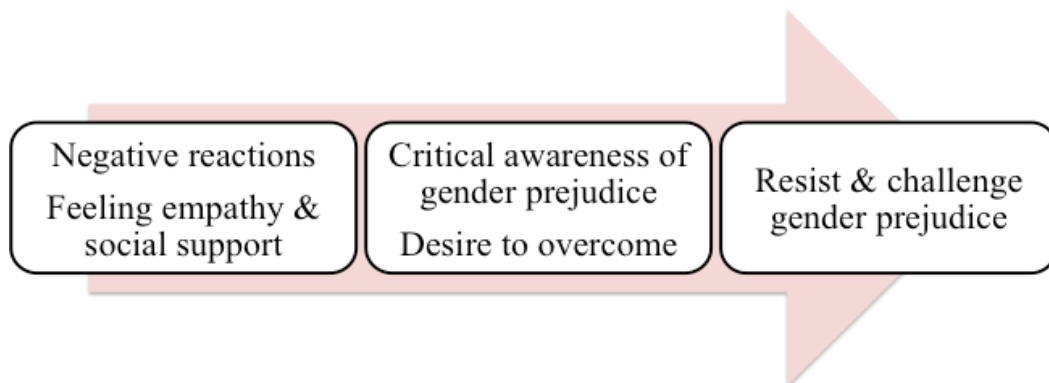


Figure 3: Process of Action Empowerment

which, in this study, was the oppressive experiences occurred by participating in the masculine sports. Feminist researchers agreed with Zimmerman by considering gaining critical awareness as being necessary for taking a collective action to advocate for women and resist oppressive gendered perceptions or practices in society.

There are reasons that Zimmerman and feminists considered that action empowerment needed to be achieved. First, to Zimmerman, empowerment is not simply self-perception of competence but includes active engagement in one's community and an understanding of one's sociopolitical environment. Based on the results of this study, playing masculine sports, which are also in team setting, enabled some of the participants to gain the both interactional and behavioral components. Playing masculine sports created rejecting experiences that eventually led to gaining critical awareness of gender prejudice and its cause.

Second, Zimmerman argued that empowered people need to care about the community they live in and improve people's quality of life in the community. The ideology behind the Psychological Empowerment is far from individualism as the concept is established firmly in a social action framework that includes community change and collectivity (Keiffer, 1984). In this study, the sport experiences in team setting enabled the women to gain social support and share their unique oppressive experiences, which may be able to lead a collective action. Therefore, these team, masculine sports have a capacity to achieve the empowerment that Zimmerman and feminists pursue. The experiences of such sports, although they can be negative and disempowering experiences in the midst of the participation setting, need to be

considered valuable for this concept of empowerment and social change in the overall context of a woman's life.

However, do we always need to take collective actions to change social values and prejudices, as Zimmerman and feminists argue? Collective resisting actions may not be always desirable because they are often seen as radical. Such actions can be followed by backlash from both men and women as well. For most Korean men and women in particular, such actions may be too radical. Even some of female sport participants can think it is too radical so they do not want to engage in the actions. As a result, participants may drop out or be forced to drop out by their families or husbands.

### **New Mechanism of Empowerment**

This study discovered a new mechanism by which women can achieve self empowerment. Previous work (e.g., Blinde et al., 2001) proposed a mechanism for empowerment that included setting goals, establishing strategies, being competitive, and achieving the goal. The result of this empowerment was a proactive approach to life. Sport participation in this study also resulted in a proactive approach to life but via a different mechanism. The Korean women in this study acquired a proactive approach to life by recognizing the lack of attention to self and paying attention to self in Korean culture. This mechanism is significant in Korean culture because women are socialized to pay more attention to others than themselves. It is important to note that contrary to Zimmerman's framework an awareness of a causal agent did not play an important role in the mechanism for these women to achieve self empowerment and make subtle personal

changes. Understanding the mechanism by which self empowerment is achieved enables program designers to create an intentionally empowering sport program.

### **Toward New Conceptualization of Empowerment**

According to Zimmerman, self empowerment was fundamental but not sufficient to achieve Psychological Empowerment. Most feminist researchers argue that social resistance or collective actions are more salient and effective at delivering social change to gender differentiations and women's disadvantages (Stromquist, 2002). In this study, the participants felt empowered through the feelings of attention to self and caring more about themselves, even if these feelings did not lead to any visible actions to change the causal agents in their lives. In some cultures with certain social pressures, self empowerment alone can be sufficient for some women to create subtle personal changes in their lives and may be what they want or all that they can envision in their life, particularly at a specific point in time (see Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

We need to understand more about the empowering outcomes of sport participation as they pertain to women's lives and experiences. It is possible that self-perceptions are a stepping-stone on the path to ultimate Psychological Empowerment of Zimmerman. In particular, we need to understand when and why individuals may stop their progress toward Psychological Empowerment and when and why they consider self empowerment alone sufficient.

One explanation that has been suggested for why women do not move beyond self empowerment is that they are already socialized with the gender prejudice of society which limits their concept of what is and can be possible for them as a woman (Wendt &

Seymour, 2010). Because they are socialized with the gender bias and prescription, what they should be or not be and how they should behave or not behave, some women may consider the social rejection par for the course. For this reason, the majority of women may not be able to realize that they want to react and resist the social rejection. Some may say that whether or not they want to take resisting actions is up to them and is their decision. However, if women were already prescribed or socialized to accept the gender prejudice and people's rejection to their desire, then we cannot trust these women's ability to decide for themselves any more. Because these women may make their decision based on this prescribed way of thinking, researchers and educators as the intellectual in a community need to play a role here and need to influence these women's decision-making process.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Researchers, educators, and sport organizers play an important role to induce the intended empowering outcomes from sport participation. The intellectuals – researchers and educators need to provide sport experience opportunities that lead to empowerment for those who need or want it. Foucault's description of the role of the intellectuals offers insights about a key responsibility for creating conditions conducive to the achievement of self empowerment and action empowerment.

The role of the intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he do so? ... The work of an intellectual is not to shape others' political will; it is, through analyses that he carries out in his own field, to question over



and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted to re-examine rules and institutions ... to participate in the formation of a political will. (Foucault & Kritzman, 1988, p. xvi, as cited in Wendt & Seymour, 2010)

Based on Foucault's insights, researchers and educators have a responsibility to help women make a decision for themselves of what they want or need to gain from sport participation without telling them what they want. Because of cultural context and social pressure, most participants are unable to know what they want or need to become empowered. This heightens the need for enlightened researchers and educators to teach perspectives outside of the individual's context.

Once a participant is enlightened to understand what they truly want or need from a sport program, they become invaluable to the organizers for planning the program. A sport organizer can create more empowering experiences by involving these enlightened participants in the planning of the program. If an organizer invites input from a participant that is not enlightened, for example not understanding what they truly want, then the program is less likely to produce empowering outcomes and may produce false sense of empowerment. One way to involve participants' input is conducting participatory action research (see Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005).

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that sport program organizers integrate individual and social settings into their offerings to maximize the empowering benefits of a sport program. The different settings for the sport need to compliment each other for an optimum effect. For example, individual sport programs that include social

events or group activities can provide participants an opportunity to bond and develop social skills. Similarly, a team sport program that includes an additional session to encourage participants to meditate or focus on self before or after the main sport experience, for instance, a soccer team can meditate before their games or practices.

Furthermore, the participants in this study recognized gendered bias and practices through oppressive experiences. However, those experiences may not be enough for one to gain empowerment particularly when one faces gendered bias or practices in daily lives. Therefore, in order to help these women take actions to advocate for themselves or resist gendered bias or practices, an instructor, a coach, or a leader can facilitate discussion before, during, or after sport programs, share their oppressive experiences with teammates and encourage them to think about what kinds of action they can initiate.

By considering empowerment transfer-inducing moderators sport organizers can design sport programs that optimally transfer empowerment from sport participation to daily life. Three moderators identified in this study to consider are: social settings of sport, gender-related characteristics of sport, and the level of involvement in sport participation. First, if participants desire to become more attentive to self, the organizers or instructors need to focus on providing individual setting of sport. On the other hand, if the participants desire to feel supported, then the organizers or instructors need to concentrate on creating social environment in sport. Second, to help empowerment transfer from gender-specific sports into daily life, instructors can create the urgency to make changes in daily life by asking the participants intentional questions. Third, in order for participants to become more aware of their circumstances and more likely to take

actions in life, the organizers or instructors need to increase involvement in sports or physical activities, for example, by promoting the program, creating a moderately competitive environment, or providing incentives or rewards. Organizers can use their knowledge of these moderators to design and implement empowering sport programs.

Researchers, educators, organizers, and instructors have important and distinct roles to perform to generate empowering outcomes from sport participation. Researchers and educators should not tell the participants what to do but rather they should shape the will of the participants by guiding them to understand what they truly want or need. Organizers and instructors need to understand the mechanisms of empowerment and the moderators of transfer in order to design a program with intentionality. When they apply enlightened participants' input into sport programs, such programs will be more effective in creating and transferring the empowerment. Because sport has a capacity to generate empowering outcomes, using sport can add more value to intervention or prevention programs (e.g., leadership programs, intervention programs for victims of domestic violence) to amplify the empowering outcomes of those programs.

To gain further knowledge about practical implications, additional questions should examine: How can the perspective education be delivered effectively to the individual participants? How can action empowerment be generated without encountering negative experiences? What, if any, additional moderators will facilitate the effective transfer of empowerment? Having answers to these questions should provide additional insight for even more empowering sport programs.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This study contributes to sport management theory by providing a holistic and culturally sensitive framework of Psychological Empowerment specific to the sport context. Further, by focusing on women, this study can inform how sport can help (or limit) women gain control over their lives and resist damaging gender norms and expectations. Importantly, this study revealed two different types of individual-level empowerment: self empowerment and action empowerment. Whether self empowerment is sufficient or action empowerment is necessary for the women was discussed earlier in this section.

In summary, the results of this study suggested that perhaps sport experiences do not have to be life changing. Self empowerment may be essential and fundamental although interactional and behavioral components are important to gain action empowerment (Carr, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995). For feminists, however, acknowledgement and recognition (e.g., acknowledgement of inferior perception of women and recognition of no trust and interest in self) are necessary steps in the process to improve the status of women in society (Stromquist, 2002). However, in the case of this study, sometimes mere improvement of self-perceptions or life skills are sufficient. Therefore, it may be worthwhile, in a future study, to evaluate what women want and need to gain to be empowered in daily lives.

This study argues that gaining personal empowerment and awareness are essential to contributing to a positive change in individuals. People who become aware of gender inequality may try to make subtle changes to their daily lives, which may contribute to

altering gender distortion in society (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Furthermore, social resistance and radical social actions to change the current gender norms and expected roles can cause a backlash for the men and women who want to keep and conform to them in society. Therefore, making a personal change can be an effective small step to achieving social change.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Although this study attempted to explore the variety of sport types and sport settings, it was unable to embrace all kinds of sport or physical activity. The gender-related characteristics and social setting of sports were salient factors for whether self empowerment or action empowerment was achieved. Particularly, action empowerment could be achieved by experiences of masculine, team sports (i.e., baseball, basketball, soccer) in this study. The experiences of participation in masculine sports in an individual setting (e.g., weight lifting) can be different from team sports because individual sports lack social interactions within the sports that may lead to the absence of social support or feeling empathy. Such exclusion of masculine, individual sports may limit this study from concluding that action empowerment could be achieved solely due to the experience of masculine sports.

Some inconsistency of empowering and disempowering outcomes from same sport experiences were detected in this study. This inconsistency may be explained by two reasons. First, the sport experiences from the interview data were not from participation in programs that were intentionally designed to empower women. In that,

most sport programs in this study were not organized intentionally to empower the women. Second, the inconsistency might be due to the personal factors such as characteristics of the individuals, the strength of negative reactions from others, and the strength of family and social pressure. Focused on exploring the variety of sport experiences made the researcher difficult to include the intentionality of participating programs and to control the personal variables.

Furthermore, because empowerment varies among different populations over time in different spaces, the sport experiences and empowerment that participants gained may be unique for these specific women interviewed in this study. Because Korean women's sport experiences are different from those in Western countries or other Asian countries, the results of this study may be limited to the experiences of Korean women. Even among Korean women, this study has focused on those in young adulthood, living in urban or metropolitan areas. Therefore, implications are limited to this specific population in South Korea.

In conclusion, by using the modified Psychological Empowerment theory, we may be able to understand in-depth how participating experience in sports can empower its participants, particularly women. This may fill the knowledge gap in sport and empowerment in two ways: 1) identifying the mechanism that generates empowerment from sport participation, and 2) understanding how sport experiences catalyzed or limited the transfer of empowerment from a sport setting to daily life. Furthermore, it can contribute to the empowerment literature and practices by illustrating that self empowerment may be a worthy goal for women in certain cultural contexts – South

Korea in this study. We can also gain evidence that sports can be used as a tool to empower people and affect their lives positively. By focusing on women, this research can contribute to literature and practices on women and gender by informing how to use sports to help women gain control over their lives and ultimately liberate them from gender norms and expectations.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

To follow up this study, a participatory action research project could be conducted. This study explored the sport program elements that affected the empowering outcomes. Therefore, a researcher could work with a sport program of which participants desire to be empowered and organizers desire to empower participants. The program participants or potential participants should be included to discuss what kind of empowerment they want to achieve for their daily lives. The intellectuals need to be invited in planning the program to identify what kind of empowerment they may need because the participants do not realize what they need, which can be different from what they want. Programming experts also need to be included in designing the program to discourse the effective ways to deliver empowerment that the specific participants want or need.

Because empowerment depends on contexts, similar research approach of this study and participatory action research can be conducted for other populations (e.g., different ethnicities, cultures, or social status) to explore their own sport experiences and to involve the participants' input. Sport experiences of women in various cultures with stronger gender prejudice for women than South Korea may result in the need of different

sport programs. It is worthwhile to conduct participatory action research and create intervention programs to help those who desire empowerment to improve quality of life: for example, minorities or immigrants who live in different countries, single mothers, domestic violence victims, people with impairment, people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing poverty, or prisoners. Research for each population should identify the type of empowerment individuals need or want and the way to integrate sport to generate empowerment. If we can accumulate these cases for various people, it will help empowerment theories as well by enabling to conceptualize the theories and the necessary components for individuals and communities.

Future research needs to consider investigating the sport experience in a wider variety of sports. In this study, the individual setting sports were not the sports considered extremely masculine in South Korea but the ones more feminine or gender-neutral (e.g., yoga, cycling). In addition, yoga could be considered more of a physical activity than a pure sport. On the other hand, the masculine sports happened to be all team sports (e.g., baseball, soccer). Therefore, it would be valuable to compare the difference of participating experiences in masculine team sports with those in masculine individual sports, examine how an individual or team setting plays a role in experiences of masculine sports, and possibly also examine any differences in physical activity and sport. Moreover, as a role of an instructor or a coach is salient for the participants' empowering experiences, the further investigation is needed to explore how an interaction or no interaction with a coach has an impact on the participants' empowerment.



Further, a scale of individual-level empowerment needs to be developed to evaluate a sport program effectively, considering how much participants have been empowered, which elements have affected empowerment, and to what extent empowerment have been transferred into their daily lives. The goal of this scale development and assessment of empowerment is two-fold. The first goal is to monitor the success of a current program and assess the progress of the program toward its goal of producing the desired empowering outcomes. From this study we were able to gain a broad idea of which sport element affected empowerment as experiences in various (not specific) sport activities with various involvement levels. Second, the scale needs to be developed to examine the amount of improvement and transfer of empowerment, particularly by measuring pre- and post-program. This assessment will be able to provide valuable information for a program to help creating a program guideline.

## **Appendix**

### **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself
  - a. What is your marital status?
  - b. How old are you?
  - c. What is your job?
  - d. Where do you live?
2. Tell me about your sport background.
  - a. What kinds of sport have you played or do you play?
  - b. On what level have you played or do you play?
  - c. How long have you played?
3. Tell me more about your overall experiences of sport participation in your life.
  - a. How did or does sport play a role in your life?
  - b. What does sport mean in your life?
4. How do you think the overall experiences of sport participation affected your life?
  - a. How strongly did it affect (1-10)?
  - b. Probe for the effects on their opinions, feelings, and/or behaviors in life.
  - c. How did it change the way you think, feel, and behave in your daily life?
5. Think of a time when you think sport experience strengthened you or your capability. Tell me about that experience. (\* 4-5 times)
  - a. What were the circumstances surrounding this experience?
  - b. How did you feel then?

- c. How long did this feeling last?
  - d. How do you feel now?
  - e. How did the experience and/or the feeling affect your daily life? (How strongly? 1-10)
  - f. How did it change the way you think, feel, and behave in your daily life?
6. Think of a time when you think sport experience weakened you or your capability. Tell me about the experience. (\* 4-5 times)
- a. What were the circumstances surrounding this experience?
  - b. How did you feel then?
  - c. How long did this feeling last?
  - d. How do you feel now?
  - e. How did the experience and/or the feeling affect your daily life? (How strongly? 1-10)
  - f. How did it change the way you think, feel, and behave in your daily life?
7. How do you think you are different now than you were before participating in sport?
- a. What about sport do you think relates to that?
  - b. How did sport impact these feelings?
8. If we were going to design a sport program, how would you do it to empower you?
- a. What do you think are important factors to empower you?
  - b. What kinds of element would you include in a sport program?

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